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**SEPTEMBER 17**

**Mark Greif and Astra Taylor**

## Scenes from an Occupation

**Saturday, September 17**

**Astra:** The first day I arrived and, surveying the scene, was totally dispirited: same old same old, and not very substantial. Because the authorities had locked down the area in anticipation of the day's events, demonstrators were dispersed and outnumbered by police. But then I followed an impromptu procession into the park where they are now encamped. I hooked up with a group of friends and we had an "assembly" with a bunch of strangers and talked economics for two or three hours. It was kind of nice to be at a protest and, instead of marching and shouting, to be talking about ideas. It felt like the script had changed. As 7 PM approached, my friends and I left thinking the cops would clear everyone out in no time. When they made it through the night I began to give them more credit.

**Mark:** It was a nice day. I came to meet a couple of friends, and we ran into people we knew through *n+1*, met up with Astra and her friends, and then ran into people from *Dissent* and from *The New Inquiry*. We joined up, sat down, and did what the organizers asked, which was to discuss which proposals or demands were most important to us, for this collective gathering. These would be put to the General Assembly for public discussion, so this large group of strangers could figure out what its purpose was. Our circle attracted more visitors and strangers. After a series of votes and debates, the desire that brought most people in our group together was this: to restore government to citizen control, regulate finance for the common good, and get banks out of the business of buying legislators or influencing law. We talked about debt and mortgage relief and the destruction of Glass-Steagall and McCain-Feingold, and what it would take to save their purpose. We'd need the country's agreement that freedom of speech belongs only to living citizens, not corporations—to overcome the Citizens United ruling—probably by a movement for a constitutional amendment. That was our proposal! We shared email addresses and resolved to learn how to start. It wasn't till later that I realized it was Constitution Day, the 224th anniversary of the signing, before it went to the States for ratification.

**Sunday, September 18**

**Astra:** I had a Zipcar tonight and was going into Manhattan, so I dropped off

some provisions/supplies with the protesters. About the same number in the square, bedding down for a second night, and the scene was more raucous than yesterday, the occupiers more confident. "They read some books in college and now they think they know how to fix the world," one tired cop told some tourists as I walked by. A good many were assembling again as dusk fell, looking fervent, almost pious ("We need to talk about why we are here!"), while others basically partied around them.

**Wednesday, September 21**

**Astra:** All these people complaining the occupiers don't have a clear agenda, a criticism that goes back to the Seattle WTO protest (and maybe beyond). Economic justice is the point. Doesn't their being on Wall Street say that? There is plenty of Tax the Rich and get corporate money out of politics messaging going on. It's annoying that one topless lady can distract so many reporters, and also that 400 other people can't or won't just tell her to put a shirt on.

**Friday, September 23**

**Astra:** It's a very youthful event, and perhaps naive in a lot of ways, but I'm happy they're doing it. That said, I'm always a bit irritated by the incessant emphasis on the youthfulness of the demonstrators, which is a way of infantilizing and dismissing them (silly kids, they'll grow up and get over this dumb protesting stuff!), and also lets older people off the hook. Shouldn't we all be out there, railing against the vampire squid? The fact is there are plenty of older people at "Liberty Plaza," a good number of retirees mingling with the recent graduates. Our society, and the left especially, has this strange idea that young people are the revolutionary vanguard (In his famous "Letter to the New Left" C. Wright Mills made the case that youth had replaced the working class as the "historic agency"; Theodore Roszak calls this shift the "adolescentization of dissent") but of course, being young, they don't have all the answers (not that old people do either, obviously). Related to this, I find the lack of historical knowledge (about past movements and effective strategies and tactics) and institutions to pass such wisdom down so depressing—each wave of kids reinvents the wheel, believes they've fashioned it for the first time, and then there it goes, off the rails. I hope a fraction of them go on to dig in for the long haul and build some sort of infrastructure so the next generation isn't left repeating this pattern...

**Saturday, September 24**

**Astra:** After dinner I meandered down to Wall Street. There were maybe 400 or 500 people occupying the park and tons of cops. Turns out that a good number of demonstrators had been arrested earlier today when they marched to Union Square. Even though they had lost eighty people to the arrests and the police were in full intimidation mode, the square felt vital. They've managed to stay a week,

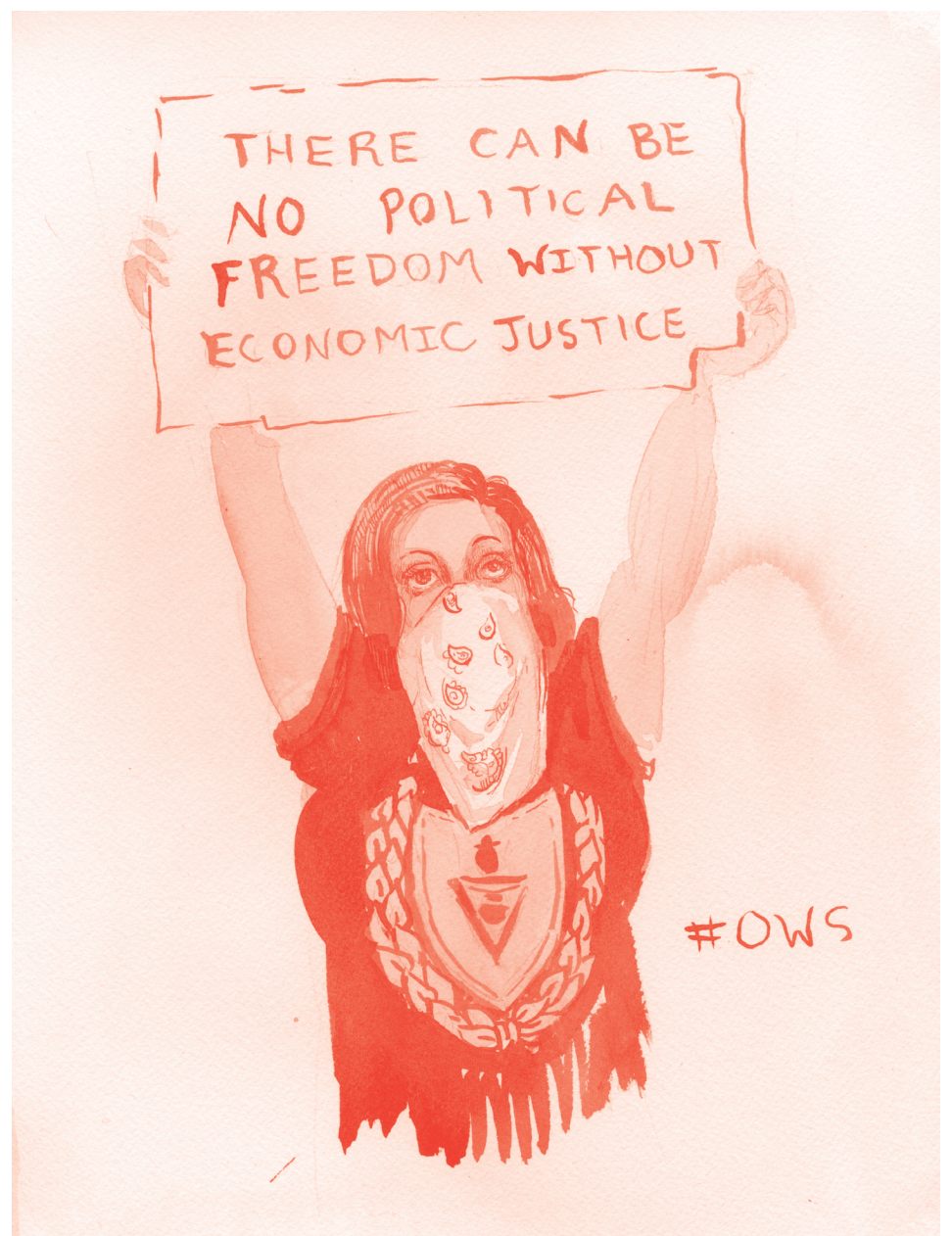
which is something. And they really appreciated the zucchini bread and the mango juice, so thanks for the donations.

I'd love it if a fraction of my friends who have presented sensible intellectual critiques of the action, or who have said, "They have a good message but they are the wrong people to spread it," showed up to Wall Street, since the implication is you want to see more people like yourselves down there.

**Sunday, September 25**

**Mark:** Nine days is nothing to sneeze at. I know people keep complaining that the occupiers don't have a platform, but any real deliberative convention takes time, and these folks were strangers nine days ago. The idea of the occupation, to me, is to remind everyone that Wall Street belongs to the City of New York, the banks' money belongs to the American citizens and people worldwide who have temporarily parked some of it with them (hoping they'll do some good with it), and the rules they play by ultimately come from us. I wish the NYPD didn't feel obliged to pen the protesters in away from Wall Street, though, and I hope Burger King on the northwest corner continues to be generous with its bathroom.

I made it to the General Assembly tonight. Weird for me, after so much suspicion in universities and professional groups, all my life, of order and parliamentary procedure and quick-running meetings, laughed away by saying, "Oh, since the Sixties we've forgotten all that stuff!"—to see an efficient assembly managed by kids, democratically, inclusively, and good-humoredly. I wish *n+1* meetings ran like this. The left knows more than we think it does, as always. Noam Chomsky had sent a personal message by email. It was predictably long-winded; I wished people would make the "get to your point" sign. I was sitting close to the aisle of waiting speakers and I was surprised to watch participants whom I assumed knew each other well—since they were working together smoothly—whisper to ask each other's names. They're the most easygoing bunch I've seen at a protest, and the most calmly confident. Very gentle and not rattled by disruptors. Presumably that's the confidence of nine days. Also the multiple confrontations that they've won nonviolently. The arrestees—including the man thrown to the ground and jailed for stopping to address a Chase Bank branch about its foreclosure on his parents' house—came back and described the holding cells.



MOLLY CRABAPPLE. "FACES OF OCCUPIED WALL STREET"

Eli Schmitt

## WANTING SOMETHING

When I got off the train in the Financial District last Saturday, the first thing I did was accidentally walk into a policeman. He and fifteen or so other policemen were standing in front of a barricade that had been set up to prevent anyone from entering Wall Street. As I backed away, flustered, I heard one member of a passing elderly couple say to the other, pointing between two buildings, “Is that the Freedom Tower going up over there?”

I had come to the Financial District for a gathering of leftist dissidents, an event that had been described to me as an “occupation of Wall Street.” There were a few websites explaining that “For #occupywallstreet, dispersion is part of the plan” and informing protesters that they “do not need a permit to occupy or peaceably assemble on public sidewalks.” Emails and blog posts alluded to the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision, popular uprisings in the Middle East, and the intense clout of financial institutions. The tone of the pieces varied but all shared a sense of indignation. The event seemed to be predicated on the idea that the act of assembling was threatened, that the gathering was a justification of itself.

I had trouble finding this gathering, however, since Wall Street itself had been shut down. Chase Manhattan Plaza—the designated meeting place—was surrounded by police barriers. At the barricades, I didn’t see any protesters, only tourists having their pictures taken with cops, tourists having their pictures taken by cops. It was only 3:30 PM but felt like dusk. As I walked, I came to suspect that there were no dissidents at all, that any organized group action had been squelched by the hundreds of police guarding the narrow passageways between the skyscrapers.

Finally, a friend responded to my text message and told me where the General Assembly was. The group had congregated in Zuccotti Park, at Liberty Plaza, a paved rectangle between Broadway and Trinity Place, and looked to be at least a few hundred strong. Instead of a single, unified congregation, there were smaller circles of ten to fifty people, some with megaphones. Some circles had moderators and agendas, others appeared to be more

spontaneous. Speakers took turns sharing their thoughts and suggestions: how we should be respectful to the police (“fuck the police, love the police officer”), how cronyism was destroying our democracy. People—some compelling, others less so—urged one another to storm Wall Street, shared information about where to find food and blankets, and decried the Obama Administration. Around the edges of the park, rows of police officers and large groups of protesters milled about.

Eventually, I found myself with a group of friends and acquaintances. Someone suggested that we “assemble,” so we all sat down in a circle. It seemed almost like a joke at first. We had to speak loudly to hear each other over the sounds of voices from neighboring assemblies and the occasional police siren. From time to time, a woman seated on a nearby bench rattled a tambourine.

Someone asked what the action was, what we were going to do, and someone else responded that this was the action, that we were there to talk and organize. Someone suggested that we come up with our demands as a group; then, after some deliberation, we decided we should have just one demand. Our job, as a single congregation, was to decide what was most important to us. I agreed to take notes, and as we talked wrote down the following list of potential demands:

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To repeal the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision (through a Constitutional amendment)

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To remove the bull sculpture from Wall Street (as suggested to us by a man who walked by dressed as a banker but wearing a noose instead of a tie)

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Some form of debt cancellation (either for everyone or just for students)

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Pay-as-you-go military intervention (so that wars could not be waged without Congress agreeing to finance them immediately)

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Taxes on small financial transactions (one version of this is known as a Tobin tax)

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Full employment

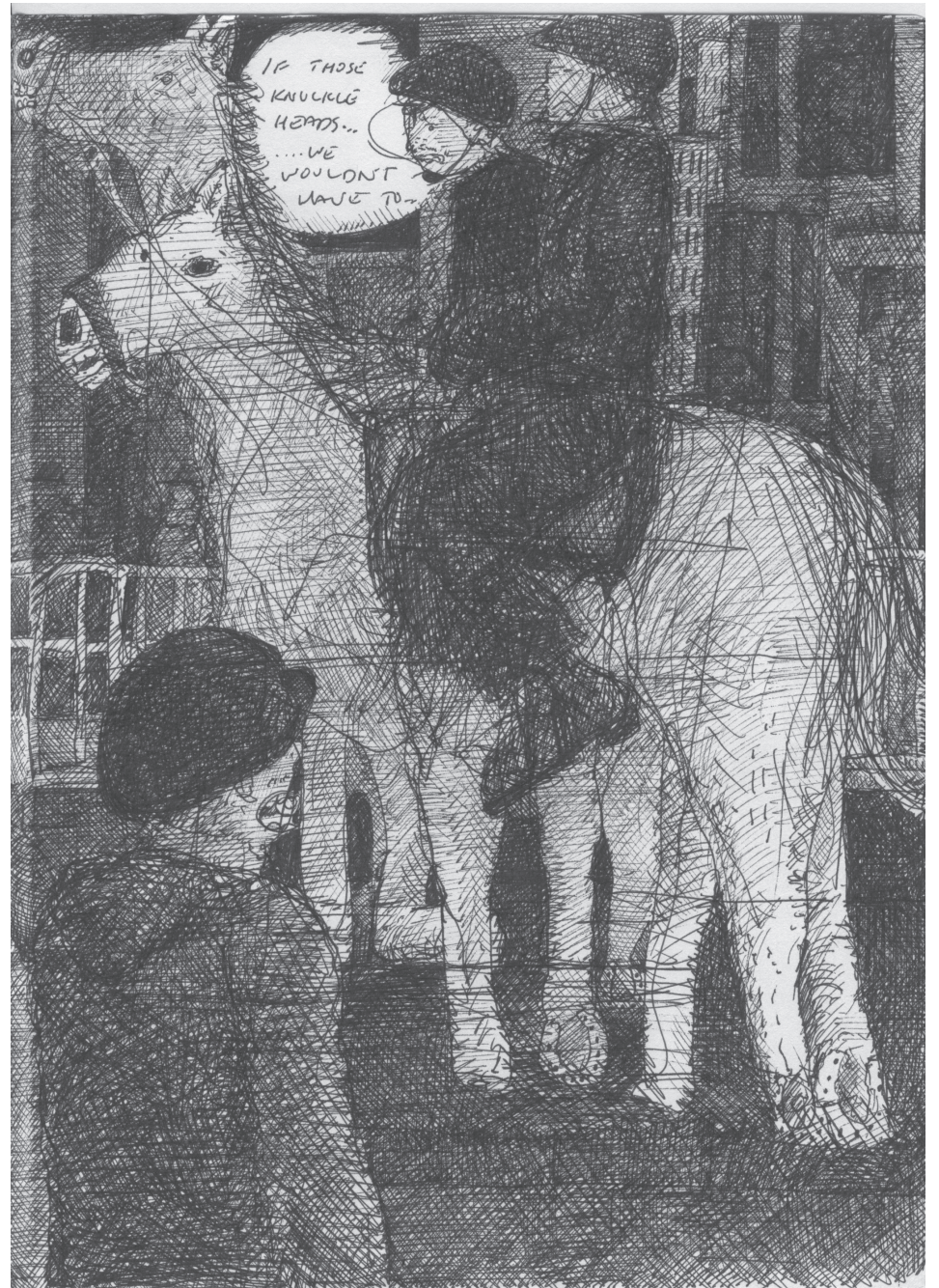
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A social wage or guaranteed income (also described as a negative income tax)

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Universal care centers (for children and the elderly)

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DAVID KEARNS. “OCCUPATION SKETCHBOOK.”

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Reinstating the Glass-Steagall act (a banking reform passed in 1933 and partially repealed in 1980)

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Paid sick leave for all working Americans

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Greater political transparency in general

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Our conversation was serious but also light-hearted. One person suggested that universal care centers be established in former post offices, once the USPS folds. Another objected to full employment as a demand, saying that Americans already work too much. In the middle of our discussion, we debated why it was problematic to make a demand, how in order for a demand to be meaningful, one must have some power to leverage. Someone asked if we could demand that our list of demands be published in *Harper's*.

As we talked, people came up and joined our circle. It was not always clear who knew someone in the group and who was a stranger. One man sat down and told us that Wall Street was not the place we should

be, that we should find the “nerve centers,” the semi-secret non-governmental organizations that write laws. Meanwhile, protesters marched around the perimeter of the plaza chanting “Whose streets? Our streets!” We talked about what criteria made for good demands.

Someone had told us that the small groups would present their deliberations later in the evening, and eventually we decided that repealing the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision was our best demand, since it would ostensibly create a more truly democratic political climate, through which our other demands could be met. We passed around a notebook and wrote down our emails, so that we could continue to talk about how to repeal *Citizens United*. Then we were done.

A member of the group offered to pass on our decision to a friend who was sticking around, since none of us were going to stay to present our demand to the General Assembly. People were going to get dinner. One of my friends had



to go to Williamsburg to bartend a film screening, as part of his unpaid internship with a film company. I walked uptown to see a friend in the East Village. Nothing had been finished.

A few days later, as I was trying to write this piece, I came across a passage in George Eliot: “For in general mortals have a great power of being astonished at the presence of an effect towards which they have done everything, and at the absence of an effect towards which they have done nothing but desire it.” Was this us? Are we living and working in a city where in order to subsist, we must cooperate with the very injustices our demands were attempting to combat? A friend I saw that night asked derisively, “What were you protesting?” Then he laughed and added, “What weren’t you protesting?” Is the whole thing stupid?

There is a temptation to say yes. Since Saturday, it has been harder for me to remain hesitant, to maintain my uncertainty about whether the people still occupying Liberty Plaza are succeeding, or could succeed,

or even what they might succeed at. We still don’t know exactly what the demands are. One of the members of our group, in discussing the criteria for a good demand, noted that Americans like to “get something” out of a political action. Repeal, enact, ban. We want visible, measurable outcomes. But we have no Mubarak, no Qaddafi. We are the country that reelected Bush, that bailed out the banks, that has stalemates in Congress about paltry tax increases. Our partial joblessness and alienating democratic system may be very real, our reasons for congregating concrete, but the precise causes of our distress are still far off, the specific solutions perhaps further.

I went back to Zuccotti Park on Monday around 11:30 PM. There were fifty people maybe, many of them sleeping, or preparing to sleep. A kid playing guitar. Someone was projecting images of Twitter onto a white screen. Hundreds of cardboard signs were laid out on the ground, lit by street lamps, waiting for protesters to take them up again. A chatty stranger from Virginia Beach told me

he had moved to New York. “Where do you live?” I asked. He gestured out at the park, at the topless men smoking hand-rolled cigarettes sitting in front of banks of computers set up on poured concrete flower beds. “I live here now. We’re going to be here for a while.”

Despite the repeated mentions of “Tahrir Square” and #globalrevolution on Twitter, the uprisings in the Middle East are probably not the best model for effecting change in America. But insofar as they constitute instances of political change instigated by groups of likeminded citizens, they are exciting to think

about. It is exciting that people are upset and have claimed a public space as both a symbol of distress and a practical means of organizing. It is exciting that the protests and the occupation have persisted for over a week. It is possible, I think, without being starry-eyed or overeager, to be hopeful. And it is OK to be hesitant. It is OK to want to get something but also not be sure exactly how to get it, or even what it is. If we have not precisely enumerated our demands yet, at least we know that we have them. We would like to get something.

**about? Most of us believe that what is most important is to open space for conversations—for democracy—real, direct, and participatory democracy. Our only demand then would be to be left alone in our plazas, parks, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods so as to meet one another, reflect together and in assembly forms decide what our alternatives are. And from there, once we have opened these democratic spaces, we can discuss what sort of demands we might have and who we believe might be able to meet these demands. Or, perhaps, once we have assemblies throughout the country, the issue of demands on someone or something will become mute. If there are enough of us, they will cease to be demands of anyone but ourselves.**

For anyone who has participated in our nightly General Assembly in Liberty Plaza, you will likely have both felt totally inspired, and not just a little confused about how it all works. Where do proposals come from? How do we come to agreement? Do people really listen to one another for hours at a time every night? Even when there are more than a thousand people? It might not appear very organized or clear . . . but . . . beneath the layers and layers of people, and the waves and waves of voices of the people’s mics, is a web of networked organization. We organize in decentralized but connected working groups. Our working groups range from the most concrete, such as food, medical, and legal to things such as art, facilitation, education, women’s needs, and safer spaces. (There are over thirty groups now listed at [www.nycga.net](http://www.nycga.net).) It is in these working groups that the day-to-day work of Occupy Wall Street takes place. I, for example, am part of two working groups, facilitation and legal. Each working group, while autonomous, also brings proposals to the larger group, the General Assembly, if the decision affects the entire body (i.e. negotiations with the Mayor’s office, or using money for bail, et cetera).

Otherwise, on any given day, education is organized, food cooked and distributed, to more than 1000 people a day, legal organized, livestreaming continuous, facilitation smooth and people physical and mental health cared for (we have a team of volunteer nurses and psychologists who are working with us), translation into seven languages including sign language, available. The list of working groups, and what each one does at this point, could be a small book. And we have just begun.

Our communication between and amongst the working groups is not yet seamless, but we continue to work at it, and as we grow and change, our forms of organization necessarily do as well. New structures are constantly discussed so as to create the most open, participatory and democratic space. We all strive to create the sort of alternative we desire in our day-to-day relationships.

## On Newness and History

Many claim that what we are doing is new. This is both true, and not.

Our movements are not without precedent—quite the opposite. “One No, many Yeses,” for example, is a direct quotation from the Zapatistas of Chiapas Mexico, who rose up in 1994 against NAFTA and what they called a death sentence for their country. The movement sparked the imaginations of millions of people around the world, and by the later 1990s other groups were emerging that also rejected the concept of hierarchical power, of looking to the state and the ultimate decision-maker, instead looking to one another. These sorts of groups ranged from the Direct Action Network in the

# HISTORY

Marina Sitrin

## ONE NO! MANY YESES

### Occupy Wall Street and the New Horizontal Global Movements

I will begin with where I am right now—in New York. Though the beginning is before the Occupation and, before the before, much farther south. But first, New York.

The on the ground organizing group was the New York General Assembly. We began meeting during the summer; our form and vision was based on the concept of the assembly. The simple intention here was to create the most horizontal and democratic space possible—using the assembly as tool.

We discussed and debated the question of demands and what we are about—and agreed to not use the framework of demands. So what are we

**Manissa Maharawal**

## Standing Up

I first went down to Occupy Wall Street last Sunday, almost a week after it had started. I didn't go down before because I, like many of my other brown friends, were wary of what we had heard or just intuited that it was mostly a young white male scene. When I asked friends about it they said different things: that it was really white, that it was all people they didn't know, that they weren't sure what was going on. But after hearing about the arrests and police brutality on Saturday and after hearing that thousands of people had turned up for their march I decided I needed to see this thing for myself.

So I went down for the first time on Sunday September 25th with my friend Sam. At first we couldn't even find Occupy Wall Street. We biked over the Brooklyn Bridge around noon on Sunday, dodging the tourists and then the cars on Chambers Street. We ended up at Ground Zero and I felt the deep sense of sadness that

place now gives me: sadness over how, what is now in essence, just a construction site changed the world so much for the worse. A deep sense of sadness for all the tourists taking pictures around this construction site that is now a testament to capitalism, imperialism, torture, oppression but what is also a place where many people died ten years ago.

Sam and I get off our bikes and walk them. We are looking for Liberty Plaza. We are looking for somewhere less alienating. For a moment we feel lost. We walk past the department store Century 21 and laugh about how discount shopping combined with a major tourist site means that at any moment someone will stop short in front of us and we will bang our bikes against our thighs. A killer combination, that of tourists, discount shopping and the World Trade Center.

The landscape is strange. I notice that. We are in the shadow of half built buildings. They glitter and twist into the sky. But they also seem so naked: rust colored steel poking its way out their tops, their sides, their guts spilling out for all to see. We get to Liberty Plaza and at first it is almost unassuming. We didn't entirely know what to do. We wandered around. We made posters and laid them on the ground (our posters read: "We are all Troy Davis" "Whose streets? Our streets!" and "Tired of Racism" "Tired of Capitalism")

And I didn't know anyone down there. Not one person. And there were a lot of young white kids. But there weren't only young white kids. There were older people, there were mothers with kids, and there were a lot more people of color than I expected, something that made me relieved. We sat on the stairs and watched everyone mill around us. There was the normal protest feeling of people moving around in different directions, not sure what to do with themselves, but within this there was also order: a food table, a library, a busy media area. There was order and disorder and organization and confusion, I watched as a man carefully changed each piece of his clothing folding each piece he took off and folding his shirt, his socks, his pants and placing them carefully under a tarp. I used the bathroom at the McDonald's up Broadway and there were two booths of people from the protest

carrying out meetings, eating food from Liberty Plaza, sipping water out of water bottles, their laptops out. They seemed obvious yet also just part of the normal financial district hustle and bustle.

But even though at first I didn't know what to do while I was at Liberty Plaza I stayed there for a few hours. I was generally impressed and energized by what I saw: people seemed to be taking care of each other. There seemed to be a general feeling of solidarity, good ways of communicating with each other, less disorganization than I expected and everyone was very very friendly. The whole thing was bizarre yes, the confused tourists not knowing what was going on, the police officers lining the perimeter, the mixture of young white kids with dreadlocks, anarchist punks, mainstream looking

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**Amy C. Offner**

# WHAT CAN YOU DO WHEN YOU CAN'T SHUT IT DOWN?

The 2001 sit-in by the Harvard living wage campaign had something in common with OccupyWallStreet: neither shut its target down. At Harvard, we occupied the main administrative building, Massachusetts Hall, for three weeks demanding a living wage with benefits for all campus workers. While top officials scurried out within hours and didn't come back, their secretaries reported to work every day, as did lower-level administrators in other buildings. What good is an occupation if it doesn't prevent the occupied from functioning? We worried about that, but we shouldn't have.

Sit-down strikes are the only non-violent takeovers that can reliably make everything stop, and that is why they are so powerful and rare. Most occupiers over the last century did not have strategically ideal relationships to the places they seized. They were members of the public planting themselves at lunch counters, voters sitting in school board offices, students sleeping in wood-paneled conference rooms, and now people on waterproofed mattresses in a privately owned plaza two blocks north of Wall Street. In all of these cases, the challenge has been to find forms of disruption that are attainable and useful, and to make the occupation the basis for activity that is not merely disruptive.

At Harvard, the living wage campaign had organized for over two years before we sat in. We had relationships with workers and unions, and we had won widespread student and faculty support. We knew the campus well enough to realize that most people backed our demand but would not support us if we physically removed administrators and clerical workers from their offices. Alienating most of the campus was not an option: we were trying to organize public opposition to the administration, not drive the community into administrators' arms.

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**US, which emerged as a part of the 1999 Seattle protests against the WTO, to the social forums in Italy, and many hundreds more around the world.**

**In 2001, the Argentinean economy collapsed. The government had no solution. The opposite. They froze people's bank accounts. In response people went into the streets, first by the dozens, then hundreds, thousands, and then tens and hundreds of thousands. They did not go out with a political party or with any printed placard, but with pots and pans, banging them together, *cacerolando*. The one chant or song that emerged in those days was "Que Se Vayan Todos! Que No Quede Ni Uno Solo!" (They all must go! Not one should remain!) And they did go: the country went through five governments in two weeks. At the same time people were in the streets they began to look around, to look to one another, to find and see one another for the first time. They created assemblies. People called it the most "natural" thing in the world. That you seek out those harmed just like you, and together begin to see if you can find solutions.**

**In Argentina in those first days and weeks people together formed hundreds of neighborhood assemblies. Workers took over their places of work and created horizontal assemblies to run them, without hierarchy, bosses, managers or differences in pay. This new togetherness also took the form of a new term. *Horizontalidad*. *Horizontalidad* is a social relationship that people at the time explained first by putting their hands out flat, and moving them back and forth, showing a flat surface. Then, when asked to be more specific, people would say, well, it is not this--bringing their hands together with the fingers at the top, making a two thirds triangle, showing a point. People describe *horizontalidad* as a relationship that helps to create other things, but it is also a goal. It is a tool for more participation, more direct horizontal participation, and the goal is to be more horizontal, more participatory using the tools. But it is not just participation in speaking, it is about how one changes in the process of participation. People also spoke of how this relationship changed them, that the idea of 'I' changed as it related to the 'we' and this the 'we' changed and again back to the 'I.'**

**Not a day goes by at Occupy Wall Street where I do not think about Argentina. This is also true now for the other occupations around the US. Assemblies, coming together and creating alternatives to the crisis, opening discussion about what we want and how. This is also a chief characteristic of what has been taking place this past year around the globe, from Egypt to Spain. In Spain they say *Democracia Real Ya!* In Greece, they have even begun to use the ancient Greek: *δημοκρατία*. *Demokratia*. Soon, I hope, in our plazas and parks, our neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces, we will all be saying something similar: *Real Democracy!***

college kids, but also the awesome black woman who was organizing the food station, the older man who walked around with his peace sign stopping and talking to everyone, a young black man named Chris from New Jersey who told me he had been there all week and he was tired but that he had come not knowing anyone, had made friends and now he didn't want to leave.

And when I left, walking my bike back through the streets of the financial district, fighting the crowds of tourists and men in suits, I felt something pulling me back to that space. It was that it felt like a space of possibility, a space of radical imagination. And it was energizing to feel like such a space existed.

And so I started telling my friends to go down there and check it out. I started telling people that it was a pretty awesome thing, that just having a space to have these conversations mattered, that it was more diverse than I expected. And I went back.

On Wednesday night I attended my first General Assembly. Seeing 300 people using consensus method was powerful. Knowing that a lot of people there had never been part of a consensus process and were learning about it for the first time was powerful. We consens-ed on using the money that was being donated to the movement for bail for the people who had been arrested. I was impressed that such a large group made a financial decision in a relatively painless way.

After the General Assembly that night there was both a Talent Show ("this is what a talent show looks like!") on one side of the Plaza and an anti-patriarchy working group meeting (which became the safer-spaces working group) on the other. (In some ways the juxtaposition of both these events happening at once

feels emblematic of one of the splits going on down there: talent shows across the square from anti-patriarchy meetings, an announcement for a zombie party right after an announcement about the killing of Troy Davis followed by an announcement that someone had lost their phone. Maybe this is how movements need to maintain themselves, through a recognition that political change is also fundamentally about everyday life and that everyday life needs to encompass all of this: there needs to be a space for a talent show, across from anti-patriarchy meetings, there needs to be a food table and medics, a library, everyone needs to stop for a second and look around for someone's phone. That within this we will keep centrally talking about Troy Davis and how everyone is affected by a broken, racist, oppressive system. Maybe, maybe this is the way? )

I went to the anti-patriarchy meeting because even though I was impressed by the General Assembly and its process I also noticed that it was mostly white men who were in charge of the committees and making announcements and that I had only seen one woman of color get up in front of everyone and talk. A lot was said at the anti-patriarchy meeting about in what ways the space of the occupation was a safe space and also not. Women talked about not feeling comfortable in the drum circle because of men dancing up on them and how to change this, about how to feel safe sleeping out in the open with a lot of men that they didn't know, about not-assuming gender pronouns and asking people which pronouns they would prefer.

Here is the thing though: I've had these conversations before, I'm sure a lot of us in activist spaces have had these conversations before, the ones that we need to keep having about how to make sure everyone

**If we couldn't prevent university officials from functioning at all, we could disrupt their work. Our presence in the building kept the top leadership from coming to campus, and more importantly, the media and public attention that we focused on them made it impossible for them to do anything but respond to us for three weeks. The president could not appear at public events, beg money from donors, or put on a show for prospective students without facing public rebuke. Administrators' email accounts, voicemail boxes, and fax machines overflowed with messages about labor policy. University lawyers, press officers, police, and low-level deans became crisis managers unable to attend to routine responsibilities.**

**When we'd first entered the building we'd split into groups, and one group took the bathroom. Access to the bathroom meant we could turn to concerns beyond holding the space. Our reliance on this kind of disruption meant that what happened outside the building was as important as the action inside. We debated university officials on national television and hosted everything from civil disobedience trainings to religious services to barbecues outside the building. The campus dining hall workers folded the sit-in into their contract campaign, alumni launched a solidarity sit-in at the Harvard Club of New York, and 400 faculty members published a full-page ad in the *Boston Globe* calling for a living wage. When President Neil Rudenstine made an appearance at a campus arts festival, he was chased back to his chauffeured car by whistling and singing protesters.**

**While the sit-in disrupted the normal functioning of the university, it also had the constructive effect of creating a new political environment on campus. Workers and unions that had been acting without allies attained new power and public legitimacy. The janitors' union, which had been in shambles thanks to miserable leadership, began a process of internal reorganization. Students, faculty, workers, and community members found themselves in a position to discuss their ideas of justice and their responsibilities to one another.**

feels comfortable, how to not assume gender pronouns and gender roles. But there were plenty of people in this meeting who didn't know what we were doing when we went around and asked for people's names and preferred gender pronoun. A lot of people who looked taken aback by this. Who stumbled through it, but also who looked interested when we explained what we were doing. Who listened to the discussion and then joined the conversation about what to do to make sure that Occupy Wall Street felt like a space safe for everyone. Who said that they had similar experiences and were glad that we were talking about it.

This is important because I think this is what Occupy Wall Street is right now: less of a movement and more of a space. It is a space in which people who feel a similar frustration with the world as it is and as it has been, are coming together and thinking about ways to recreate this world. For some people this is the first time they have thought about how the world needs to be recreated. But some of us have been thinking about this for a while now. Does this mean that those of us who have been thinking about it for a while now should discredit this movement? No. It just means that there is a lot of learning going on down there and that there is a lot of teaching to be done.

On Thursday night I showed up at Occupy Wall Street with a bunch of other South Asians coming from a South Asians for Justice meeting. Sonny joked that he should have brought his dhol so we could enter like it was a baarat. When we got there they were passing around and reading a sheet of paper that had the Declaration of the Occupation of Wall Street on it. I had heard the "Declaration of the Occupation" read at the General Assembly the night before but I didn't realize that it was going to be finalized as THE declaration of the movement right then and there. When I heard it the night before with Sonny we had looked at each other and noted that the line about "being one race, the human race, formally divided by race, class. . ." was a weird line, one that hit me in the stomach with its naivety and the way it made me feel alienated. But Sonny and I had shrugged it off as the ramblings

of one of the many working groups at Occupy Wall Street.

But now we were realizing that this was actually a really important document and that it was going to be sent into the world and read by thousands of people. And that if we let it go into the world written the way it was then it would mean that people like me would shrug this movement off, it would stop people like me and my friends and my community from joining this movement, one that I already felt a part of. So this was urgent. This movement was about to send a document into the world about who and what it was that included a line that erased all power relations and decades of history of oppression. A line that would de-legitimize the



PHOTO BY STANLEY ROGOUSKI

**Ten years later in New York, the organizers of OWS have organized disruption brilliantly. They have brought enormous crowds to Lower Manhattan, spurred parallel protests in other cities, and used social and traditional media to reorient national political discussion. The open-ended nature of the Occupation permits useful forms of escalation. When the organizers started, sleeping in a park was most disruptive gesture they could pull off. One month later, Lloyd Blankfein is canceling his speaking engagements for fear of public humiliation and OWS supporters are planning nonviolent actions to disrupt the functioning of banks. Shutting down Wall Street is a long way off, but the gyre is widening.**

**The occupation's greatest achievement, though, has been its transformation of public discussion. Those who denigrate the crowd at Zuccotti Park as incoherent fail to recognize the protest's constructive role in fostering discussion of social and economic issues. Most people in the United States have little experience reasoning about what's wrong with our society and what a better one would look like, and inevitably people bring all sorts of ideas to the occupation. The varied, contradictory, even bizarre claims that the protest elicits do not mean that OWS is only valuable as a disruptive act that might facilitate the replacement of Ben Bernanke with a new and better technocrat. The crowds assembling in Lower Manhattan exhibit a profound desire for discussion, participation, and simple recognition that ordinary people exist and matter. We would be fools to ignore this opportunity to build a more democratic, deliberative, and informed political culture.**

movement, this would alienate me and people like me, this would not be able to be something I could get behind. And I was already behind it this movement and somehow I didn't want to walk away from this. I couldn't walk away from this.

And that night I was with people who also couldn't walk away. Our amazing, impromptu, radical South Asian contingency, a contingency which stood out in that crowd for sure, did not back down. We did not back down when we were told the first time that Hena spoke that our concerns could be emailed and didn't need to be dealt with then, we didn't back down when we were told that again a second time and we didn't back down when we were told that to "block" the declaration from going forward was a serious serious thing to do. When we threatened that this might mean leaving the movement, being willing to walk away. I knew it was a serious action to take, we all knew it was a serious action to take, and that is why we did it.

I have never blocked something before actually. And the only reason I was able to do so was because there were 5 of us standing there and because Hena had already put herself out there and started shouting "mic check" until they paid attention. And the only reason that I could in that moment was because I felt so urgently that this was something that needed to be said. There is something intense about speaking in front of hundreds of people, but there is something even more intense about speaking in front of hundreds of people with whom you feel aligned and

you are saying something that they do not want to hear. And then it is even more intense when that crowd is repeating everything you say, which is the way the General Assemblies or any announcements at Occupy Wall Street work. But hearing yourself in an echo chamber means that you make sure your words mean something because they are being said back to you as you say them.

And so when we finally got everyone's attention I carefully said what we felt was the problem: that we wanted a small change in language but that this change represented a larger ethical concern of ours. That to erase a history of oppression in this document was not something that we would be able to let happen. That we knew they had been working on this document for a week, that we appreciated the process and that it was in respect to this process that we wouldn't be silenced. That we demanded a change in the language. And they accepted our change and we withdrew our block as long as the document was published with our change and they said "find us after and we will go through it" and then it was over and everyone was looking somewhere else. I stepped down from the ledge I was standing on and Sonny looked me in the eye and said "you did good" and I've never needed to hear that so much as then.

Which is how after the meeting ended we ended up finding the man who had written the document and telling him that he needed to take out the part about us all being "one race, the human race." But it's

"scientifically true" he told us. He thought that maybe we were advocating for there being different races? No we needed to tell him about privilege and racism and oppression and how these things still existed, both in the world and someplace like Occupy Wall Street.

Let me tell you what it feels like to stand in front of a white man and explain privilege to him. It hurts. It makes you tired. Sometimes it makes you want to cry. Sometimes it is exhilarating. Every single time it is hard. Every single time I get angry that I have to do this, that this is my job, that this shouldn't be my job. Every single time I am proud of myself that I've been able to say these things because I used to not be able to and because some days I just don't want to.

This all has been said by many many strong women of color before me but every time, every single time these levels of power are confronted. I think it needs to be written about, talked about, gone through over and over again.

And this is the thing: that there in that circle, on that street-corner we did a crash course on racism, white privilege, structural racism, oppression. We did a course on history and the declaration of independence and colonialism and slavery. It was hard. It was real. It hurt. But people listened. We had to fight for it. I'm going to say that again: we had to fight for it. But it felt worth it. It felt worth it to sit down on the on a street corner in the Financial District at 11:30 pm on a Thursday night, after working all day long and argue for the changing of the first line of Occupy Wall Street's official Declaration of the Occupation of New York City. It felt



MARK RUDD

Dear OWSers:

I've been thinking a lot about mass movements, radical and otherwise, more or less continually since 1965, when, as an 18 year-old freshman at Columbia, I got swept up into the anti-Vietnam War and radical movements. The young people already educating themselves on the war and protesting it were the coolest kids around and I wanted to be one of them. What made them so attractive was not only their intelligence, but that they were on fire with moral outrage.

That's exactly the same feeling I get from Occupy Wall Street. Your moral commitment unmistakably shines out. Bravo! Many of us old people had almost given up hope because it seemed that our whole society had become completely deadened to the hideous immoralities we live with--poverty, greed, racial injustice, militarism, mass incarceration. Yet finally and out of the blue somebody's standing up and saying Enough! That in itself is close to miraculous. Thank you for allowing yourselves to become morally engaged and for having the courage to act.

On top of that, your actions and words have been brilliant at communicating what you're about. "We are the 99%" is a crystal clear metaphor exposing the elite we're fighting. Even the Albuquerque Journal, my local daily newspaper not exactly dedicated to exposing the truth, regularly reports Occupy demonstrations as being (in their words) "against corporate greed." You've pulled off another miracle.

There's even more: you've been able to draw out in support of the movement against the corporate elite thousands of union workers and other progressives, not only in New York

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City and around the country, but around the world. You may have shifted conventional politics to the left, as both Republicans and Democrats fear or welcome, respectively, the rise of a populist progressive movement analogous to the influential (but illogical and ridiculous) Tea Party on the right. That's a lot to have accomplished by a few people in a short time.

That's it for unmitigated praise. Now a few "issues" that occur to me. I hope this may be helpful to you.

In general, all the Occupy actions, the encampments and the demonstrations, have been admirably nonviolent and disciplined. Despite being attacked by police numerous times, most people have kept their cool, understanding that any show of violence on our part will be used as justification for more attacks and will isolate the movement. But there are plenty of people--perhaps they're not very intelligent or perhaps they're police agents--who advocate fighting the police as surrogates for the corporate and banking elites they're protecting. Big Mistake! The Vietnam anti-war movement split and weakened over this phony issue of militancy; my own faction of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Weathermen, mistakenly raised fighting cops and then guerilla warfare to the level of strategy. Indeed, it was a disastrous strategy, doomed to failure. We thought that our acting on our beliefs would show our seriousness and attract people to the revolutionary movement. It did the opposite. Please don't fall into the same error.

One thing about nonviolence as a strategy is that it has to be total. A drop of violence, even so far as calling

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worth it not only because we got the line changed but also because while standing in a circle of 20, mostly white men, and explaining racism in front of them: carefully and slowly spelling out that I as a woman of color experience the world way differently than the author of the Declaration, a white man, that this was not about him being personally racist but about relations of power, that he needed to, he urgently needed to listen and believe me about this, this moment felt like a victory for the movement on its own.

And this is the other thing. It was hard, and it was fucked up that we had to fight for it in the way we did but we did fight for it and we won. The line was changed, they listened, we sat down and re-wrote it and it has been published with our re-write.

And when we walked away, I felt like something important had just happened, that we had just pushed a movement a little bit closer to the movement I would like to see, one that takes into account historical and current inequalities, oppressions, racisms, relations of power, one that doesn't just recreate liberal white privilege but confronts it head on. And if I have to fight to make that happen I will. As long as my people are there standing next to me while I do that.

Later that night I biked home over the Brooklyn Bridge and I somehow felt like the world was, just maybe, at least in that moment, mine, as well as everyone dear to me and everyone who needed and wanted more from the world. I somehow felt like maybe the world could be all of ours.

cops "pigs," can taint the whole movement as being violent. So far you've been pretty cool about all this, but watch out for stupid people (mostly young men) and for cops who infiltrate in order to wreck the movement. "Diversity of tactics" (property damage or even violence in self-defense) inherently sabotages nonviolence. It's the tyranny of the few against the many.

How do movements grow? So far the two tactics of physical occupation of space and of demonstrations have attracted a certain number. But what part of the 99% have joined the movement? Here in Albuquerque, a city of half a million, a few dozen are occupying a city park next to the university, while a few hundreds from time to time join in demonstrations. Occasionally some students passing by are drawn to daily teach-ins. But for the most part, few people understand what's going on; what they see of the occupiers is the predictable bunch of street people, old rads with gray hair and pot-bellies, and homeless people. I hope I'm not hurting anybody's feelings too badly, but most of my neighbors are terrified to interact with this bunch. They're way too marginal and "normal people" don't think that they have anything in common.

So some thought has to be given to how to "organize" the rest of the 99%. By organize I mean how to grow the movement. The best place to learn about organizing is to look at successful movements. There have been a lot of them in the twentieth century—labor, civil rights, peace, gay rights, women's, disabled people's, environmental and anti-nuclear. All of these have used organizing models that involve building relationships with people, talking, learning each other's stories, developing people's capabilities and leadership. For the last few years I've been studying the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's (SNCC) work in Mississippi from 1961 to 1964 to learn what good organizing is. These young black people went into one of the most terrifying and violent places in the South, the Mississippi Delta region, and in three years were able to organize a victorious mass voting rights movement. How did they do it? The answer is complicated, but at its core was an organizing method that was horizontal and democratic. It's exactly the same "Participatory Democracy" that you've been trying to build via your General Assemblies. In fact the term Participatory Democracy was originated by SNCC and later came to white kids via SDS.

Movements don't happen spontaneously as people see others acting and then decide to join in. That's what's happened so far, but you've probably reached a limit. It's time to

**DAY 8**  
**SEPTEMBER 29**

ELIZABETH GUMPORT

## *Back at Zuccotti Park*

I went back to Zuccotti Park last night, for the first time since the 17th. Michael Moore was there, reporting for MSNBC from the corner of Liberty Street and Trinity Place. A crowd gathered around him; "down in front," people called out, and everyone sat. Then most of them stood back up. A shot of Michael Moore sitting in a director's chair, in a dark, possibly empty park, surrounded by a couple of security guards: apparently this does not make for good television. We're live, someone said, and a boy standing behind Moore waved at the camera. People held their phones up the air and took pictures, like they do at concerts.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the park, the General Assembly was in session. The group here was much larger than the one gathered around Moore, but it didn't feel like a crowd—people were calm, attentive, at ease. A lot of them were sitting down. In order to be heard, speakers relied on "human microphones": they'd say a few words, then pause while the group repeated

their statement. After an explanation of the assembly process for the sake of any newcomers came reports from working groups. A comfort team representative requested sweatshirts, sweatpants, and socks. Justin from community relations told everyone, "You look so beautiful tonight." "You look so beautiful tonight," everyone repeated, and they were right. They did look very beautiful. Maybe only someone as ignorant of strategy—of history—as I am would be impressed by this. But people—the ones who figured out how to do these things, the ones doing them now—are impressive! There was an announcement: the night before, someone named Sergio had asked for a translator. A translator had been found, and was present at the Assembly. If Sergio was there—and he was! There was Sergio, joyful, emerging from the circle. Someone else read a letter from the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, thanking the occupiers for rallying in solidarity with New York City postal employees on Tuesday.

Later, I dropped off the supplies I'd brought—cough drops, Cold-Eeze, tampons—with a protester manning the medical station. He'd come from California and has been there since the beginning. The first night, he said, about sixty people camped out; tonight he estimated it would be six hundred. Two recent arrivals had some questions for him: where did people go to use the bathroom? (McDonald's—the nearby Burger King won't even serve protesters anymore, never mind let them use the restroom.) Was it OK to leave their bags out? (Pretty much, just be sure to put your camera or whatever in a case.)

start figuring out how to organize. You've been operating on self-expression, but now there's got to be strategy beyond self-expression.

Part of strategy has got to be coalition-building. Here's a problem: many of the OWS people are completely opposed to the current system of money and politics. They rightly condemn both the Republican and Democratic Parties. All cool. But many of your supporters, such as myself, believe that there's a chance worth taking in devoting our energies to reforming the Demo Party, in trying to move it toward the left. We believe that the main reason President Obama has been such a disappointment is that there are just not enough progressive votes in Congress and that there's no mass movement on the left to elect a new Congress. Here in Albuquerque there's a congressional seat opening up in 2012. The two main candidates for the Democratic nomination are a mainstream center-right sold-out ex-city mayor and a young progressive state senator. I'm working for the young guy. He has a chance of winning, but only if enough people come out and work for him, if enough people get fired up. I support Unoccupy Albuquerque (the new name), but can Unoccupy Albuquerque support my electoral efforts? What's a coalition? Here diversity of tactics make perfect sense—direct action combined with electoral work.

Unless ideological factionalism rears its ugly head, as has happened so many times before on the left. My anarchist ideas are right and your belief in reforming the Democratic Party is bullshit. I'm smart and you're not. Change isn't possible through elections, but only through organizing general assemblies in which people practice direct democracy. Your ideas are immature and utopian and won't work in the real world. Grow up. I used to believe in revolution but I've learned it's not going to happen.



And then: what were they doing? Or going to do next—or what—he wasn't quite sure how to put it, but the veteran occupier nodded understandingly. It was the same implicit, atmospheric question that had been asked when I joined my friends in the park on the 17th, the first day of the protest. We sat, talked, proposed demands, and left before dusk—not a bad way to spend an afternoon. But it had been summer then, and it was fall now, and night: a new season, a change in the air. Something had been affirmed, and now there was a greater sense of opportunity—and also, perhaps, responsibility. The question might have been the same, but now, twelve days later, maybe the answer was—or could be, or should be—different. (Which doesn't mean rushed: it takes time to take things seriously.)

Across the plaza, the General Assembly was still going on. Russell Simmons briefly addressed the crowd, followed by a woman who knew how to crochet and proposed starting a group to make hats, scarves, and gloves. It was, she said, going to get cold soon. It was already raining, and I left. On the train home, I opened the book I'd brought with me and found in it the words for what it was I'd felt in the park: "The present winter is worth an age if rightly employed."

Capitalism is about to fall. Capitalism will be around a long time. Blah blah blah. No wonder a leftist firing squad is often characterized as being a circle. It's a wonder we ever ended the war in Vietnam the way we used to fight among ourselves. Nobody has a monopoly on truth, get over it.

The old New Left, which more or less devolved into single issue politics in the seventies and eighties then expired in the nineties, never really considered the problem of power. Meanwhile, the old New Right, led by crackpots like Karl Rove, actually attained power starting with Reagan in 1981. They did it by a savvy strategic linkup of ideological conservatives with a Christian fundamentalist base. What will be your strategy to rise to power? (My generation will probably be long gone). Ignore the question at your own risk. I assure you the other side is not.

One last point: 85% of all black voters support President Obama. Meanwhile many or most white progressives spend a lot of their time attacking him as a stooge of Wall Street. Many OWS people feel the same way. Does that mean that white OWS people are smarter than black people? Or vice versa? Or is it merely a problem of point of view?

I'm supporting Obama for re-election and at the same time working for progressive candidates for Congress. And supporting the rise of a smart direct action movement, OWS. It's not a contradiction, it's a coalition.

Good luck. I'll be watching to see how it goes.

Love,

Mark

Ellie Smith

## WOMEN'S CAUCUS

[From <http://oekoellie.wordpress.com>]

I went to Occupy Wall Street to renew my faith in American Democracy. My experiences of collective organizing on a mass scale in this country had left a somewhat bitter taste in my mouth (while the events themselves were extremely inspiring). The people of the US have such a horrible example or role model of democracy that it made sense that democratic processes in organising would be lacking.

At Occupy Wall Street the process comes before the outcome (in The Change Agency terms—in the question of "outcome vs maintenance" maintenance is winning). It's about doing things right. But with the scale of the job at hand and the nature of

the protest that is easier said than done.

This is the first movement space where I've ever really felt the need to deal with gender issues. I mean, I've sat and listened to tons of panel discussions with four or five white men telling us what we should care about and been subjected to long one on one lectures from older men telling me what I should be doing but I've never felt as marginalised and unsafe as the first night I arrived at #ows (considering I didn't feel all that marginalised or unsafe either says something for my bravery, my privileged, my luck or all three).

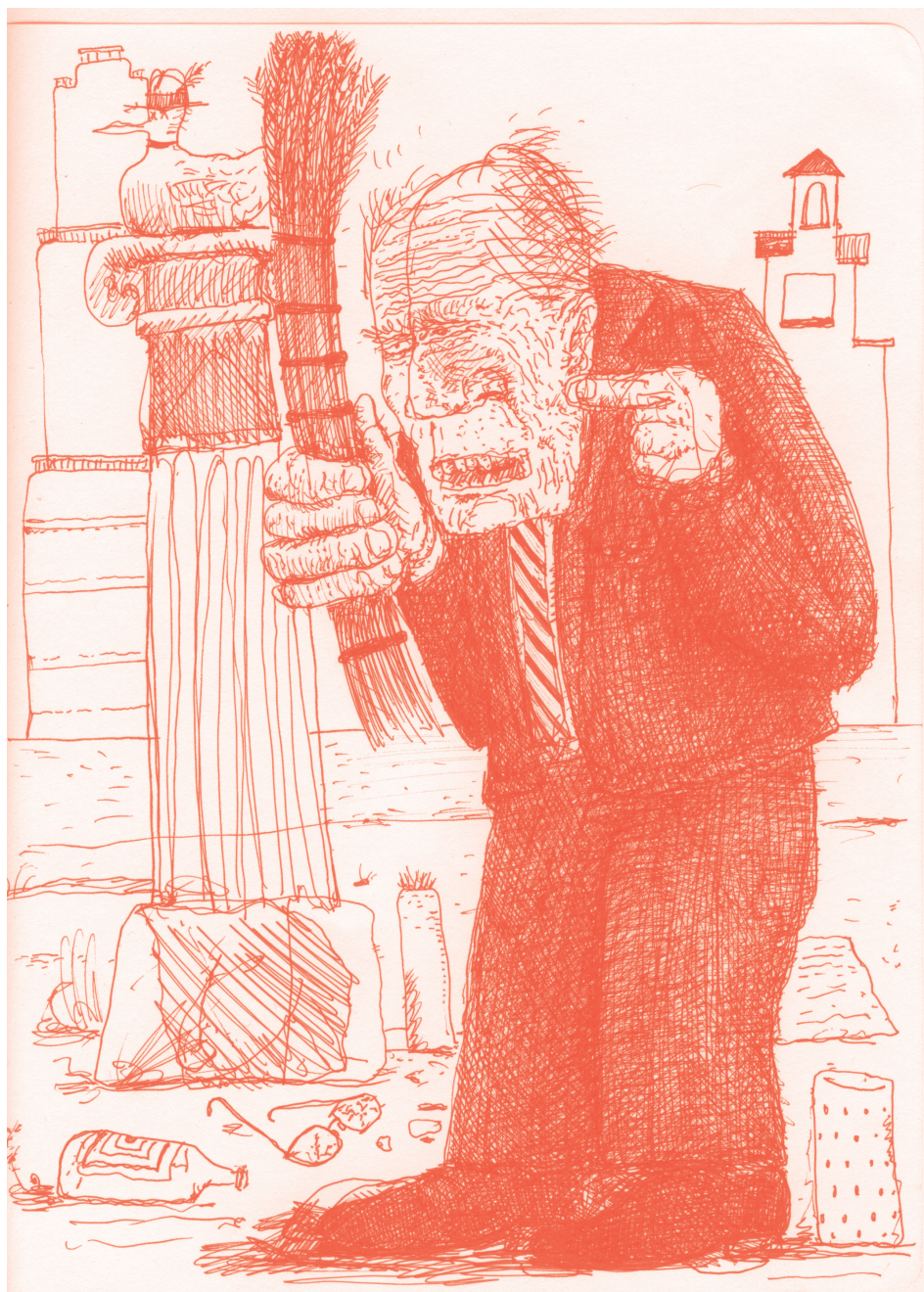
There were men everywhere. I would estimate men outnumbered women sleeping in the park three to one. I asked multiple people at the info desk about safer spaces or a space for women to sleep to no avail. I found a nice looking woman lying on her sleeping bag reading a book with a tiny space between her and a table and timidly asked if I could sleep next to her.

The next night at general assembly a woman announced a Women's Caucus meeting to discuss a women's

sleeping space. I went along to that and heard other women's stories that were so similar to my own. I'm so glad this space was set up on my second night – other women who had been around for over a week were at the end of their tether.

Because of their sheer numbers men dominate meetings, working groups and positions. This is pretty uncomfortable but not as traumatising as the thought of waking up next to a strange man. Apparently action is being taken to ensure greater representation of people of colour and women in more public groups ie facilitation and media. There's also a general assembly and news publication in Spanish.

Because the only real unifying element of this group is the physical occupation of Zuccotti Park a bulk of the people's energy is going into sustaining the space—comfort, food, medical, finances, cleaning, preparing for and sustaining bad weather . . . for me it has been ensuring the place has a safe space for women to sleep—and not into coordinating action to really take on



DAVID KEARNS, "OCCUPATION SKETCHBOOK"

wall st. The “Direct Action” working group of OWS has predominantly helped organise rallies with the aim to promote the occupation across the city. The “Outreach and Organizing” working group is using other tactics to achieve similar ends in NYC. Appealing to organisations and individuals around the city to ensure the occupation is accepted and supported on its home territory. External groups are using the concentration of people, energy and media attention to further their many and varied, related causes (RAN for example). This is fortunate! If it wasn’t for these groups almost the whole thing would be inward looking.

#### Democracy in action?

General Assembly is a fun (if exhausting and throat annihilating) exercise. It’s ridiculously long and achieves very little in terms of concrete outcomes. It’s certainly a great opportunity to share what’s going on with working groups and the facilitation has actually been exceptional! Tight.

Last night GA even had a discussion to feed into a proposal for improvements in organisational structure. 300+ (could have been more like 500) people broke into a number of groups discussed the topic for 20 minutes and reported back.

As an exercise in educating countless people in the messiness of consensus based collective organising #osw is huge. The number of people it’s turning off from this kind of organising is unknown though. Certainly almost nothing in this place it really particularly functional. Meetings rarely happen on schedule or in the place they were announced which fuels frustration from those not yet in the loop—and no doubt for those in the loop too (I do wonder if these people really exist though). Things are moving incredibly slowly. People who have been around for almost a month now are over committed and burning out fast. The flow of information to new, committed, folks seems to be disjointed and slow.

There are currently daily facilitation trainings and there are initiatives in the pipeline to do daily NVDA trainings, frequent “know your rights” trainings and more. Hopefully this event can live up to the hype and to its potential for transforming the debate around social justice in this country. At the very least it’s providing a place to stay, warm meals and the chance of empowerment for dozens of NYC’s needy.

## DAY 15 OCTOBER 1

Sarah Resnick

### Arrest, Protest, Reset

October 1, 2011

Sarah Resnick, Sent 10/1/2011 @ 1:50pm

Hey, trains all fucked up. I don’t know that I could get to wall street in time for march but I’m up for meeting down there later this afternoon. Also, I think there is a big labor march on wednesday organized by Twu.

XXXX XXXX, Sent 10/1/2011 @ 3:18pm

March ending on Bkln side of bridge

XXXX XXXX, Sent 10/1/2011 @ 4:20pm

Taken every lane of Bkln bridge

Sarah Resnick, Sent 10/1/2011 @ 4:23pm

That’s amazing. I am on the 7 train. Got stuck at book fair with no umbrella.

XXXX XXXX, Sent 10/1/2011 @ 4:39pm

Cops have penned us in the middle of the bridge. Maybe letting us leave single file but unclear.

XXXX XXXX, Sent 10/1/2011 @ 5:09pm

Might get arrested in a bit. Cops are slowly moving people off bridge.

Sarah Resnick, Sent 10/1/2011 @ 5:19pm

Really? What a waste of city resources. Keep me posted.

Sarah Resnick, Sent 10/1/2011 @ 6:39pm

Did you make it out okay?

Sarah Resnick, Sent 10/1/2011 @ 9:17pm

Okay, assuming you were arrested. If so, call 212 679 6018 when you out. The NLG. They are providing legal support/criminal defense.

XXXX XXXX, Sent 10/2/2011 @ 2:43am

I’m out.

October 5, 2011

A friend in the frontlines of Saturday’s march told me that the Brooklyn Bridge occupation was, in fact, a purposeful act. Thus far, media accounts of that afternoon had put forward conflicting information, and the story circulating through my Facebook network and in many left-sympathetic outlets, was that police seemingly directed protesters onto the bridge only to net them in and arrest them moments later—entrapment! But my friend disputed this telling, offering a very different perspective. Once the congestion of the pedestrian walkways forced protesters to spill over on the roadway, he told me, a group toward the front launched into a refrain: “Take the bridge! Take the bridge!” Assured they had the support of the hundreds of protesters behind them—all of whom were now chanting in unison—they locked arms to lead a slow and purposeful advance on the police line. At first, the police admonished the protesters, demanding they redirect onto the walkways; but vastly outnumbered, they capitulated, yielding to the advancing marchers.

Those who instigated the bridge seizure were in fact dismayed by the media portrayal. Why ascribe what is otherwise a victory for OWS—that is, remarkable evidence of the strength and power of the masses united—to the rancor of the police? Why recast a moment of transcendence as one of dupery and oppression?

October 7, 2011

I arrived late to the GA. At the mic, a man brought forward a proposal for a new working group: the resume group. “There are several of us here who are unemployed,” he said. “I’d like to propose a group to support those of us in need of work as we develop and even distribute our resumes.” Several palms raised, fingers waving—a show of support. The woman to my right was over sixty and—judging from her question—in attendance for the first time. “What’s that irritating noise?” she asked, turning toward me. “Is that a police tactic of disruption? Are they trying to make it difficult for us to hear each other?” She was, of course, referring to the clamor of the drum circle, which was, from our vantage, entirely out of sight. Their ceaseless revelry at the west end of the plaza had quickly become a point of contention among protesters, and the din was so deafening that night that it may as well have been sonic weaponry. I experienced a moment of conspiratorial paranoia: Was it possible the police were behind the drum circle, undercover cops unleashing their sacred masculine? Without legal recourse to evict the park’s new residents, a more brilliant plan couldn’t have been devised: Drive everyone to irritable madness!

During announcements, a man who claimed to carry a message from the Egyptian revolution spoke to the GA: “Choose your leaders now!” he cried. “Choose one demand now or your movement is lost!” The human mic ceased amplification, drowned by audible disapproval. This “leaderless resistance movement with people of many . . . political persuasions,” was not about to concede autonomy or participatory democracy or any of its founding tenets—not yet at least.

A facilitator took charge—we were moving on to the agenda. “Tonight there

is one item to discuss: transparency.” The movement is growing larger, we were told, and many important decisions are happening in groups outside the GA. The speaker acknowledged that he too was sometimes part of these behind-the-scenes-decision-making-bodies. But we were being asked for our perspective and our collective solutions—how might they (we?) foster a space of communicative openness and direct accountability? How could the movement sustain transparency even as its participants multiplied? We would move into temporary breakout groups to discuss and propose solutions. The assignment contained what I saw as a peculiar irony: Please tell those of us acting sub rosa how to better inform you about that which you don’t know you aren’t being informed. What “unknown unknowns” were we being asked to account for?

That there was an issue of transparency was not news to me. The GA was not, as I understood it, where core planning was being formulated, where key decisions were being passed—at least not anymore, not now that the numbers were so unwieldy. Partly this was gleaned from talking to people embedded deep in the organization of OWS—already there were rumors of backroom dealings with various NGOs and unions. But it was also common sense. Not every group with an ideological stake in the movement would take part in its manifest structure of openness and participation. As anyone with a secret knows, withholding information is a strategic decision. Where risk is involved, trust can subsist only among a few. Covertly is, at times, a necessity, and in some instances—like initial plans for future occupations—the movement may depend on it.

I wanted to stay for the discussion, but I was to meet a friend. I resolved to read the minutes later online, only to find that, at least as of this writing, they’ve still not been posted. So much for transparency.

October 10, 2011

“This march needs more balls!” yelled a tall, twenty-something man in plaid shirt, jeans, his face painted in zombie likeness. It was a Monday night, well past 9pm, and about forty of us were marching up Broadway, wielding slogan-filled placards, and cycling through the catalog of usual chants. A woman in her early twenties held a small snare drum steadily behind her back while her friend followed behind her, banging out the beat. The group was ragtag, though mostly young, and displayed much of the by-now familiar iconography adopted by demonstrators of the past several years: Guy Fawkes masks (made famous by the film *V for Vendetta*), the aforementioned zombie makeup, Anonymous flags and t-shirts. There was at least one anarcho-hassid—a subculture until then unknown to me—waving a small red and black flag.

The grievance was seemingly directed at the absence of incident. True: Were one to compare it to the clashes with riot police, or the 700 arrests on the Brooklyn Bridge, it was an uneventful march. Nothing much *happened*. The group had formed out of the Liberty Plaza encampment, heeding a fellow protester’s call to march.

When they passed us heading south on Church St., my friend James and I tagged along; we were bewildered yet somewhat thrilled by the initial absence of police accompaniment—a rarity in New York City demonstrations. The police would, of course, join us in due time, but for a brief period we were unchaperoned, free to take the street. James, electing himself provocateur, overturned a wooden police barrier then banged on the gate of a nearby storefront. “This. Is. A peaceful protest,” the group retorted. And with that we returned to the plaza to recruit more marchers.

From there we pushed onward, snaking through the narrow roadways of the financial district as residents gaped from their four- and five-story vantages, the dimly lit rectangles of their cameraphones visible from below. The police were alongside us now, we were back on the sidewalk. We made conversation with the strangers among us. A man in a navy pin-stripe suit towed behind and asked when we planned to stop ruining the lives of the children, they hadn’t slept in three weeks. “I’m on your side,” he told me. “I used to live in a mansion. I lost everything and now I live in a two bedroom apartment. But the children need to sleep.” We had no plan, no stated objective, but to walk—to be visible, audible, that was all. There were no confrontations, no batons unsheathed, no whistles, nor shouting, nor force of any kind. The cops looked bored, worn, distracted even—the protest had its longeurs.

October 15, 2011

5pm

I was part of a group of fifty or so that made its way from the steps of the New York Public Library to the massive convergence at Times Square. We were united under a banner—the artists and writers affinity group. We were friends, colleagues, acquaintances, and there was a palpable sense of anticipation; this evening there would be other occupation attempts, we were told. The movement would expand. We marched up Avenue of the Americas eager to join the demonstration, many of us with our now familiar poster: “Money talks—too much. Occupy!”

After several route diversions and a subsequent, though temporary confusion, we eventually settled into the crowd near the junction of Broadway and 7th Ave. The sun had started to set, though it seemed no darker in the enduring glow of the animated LED advertisements. A lingerie-clad model, terrifying at ten stories tall, stood opposite the crowd. We cheered and ardently held our signs above us, a shield of sorts. (Though the area’s porn theaters and peep shows have now long disappeared, a more sinister perversion persists.) Soon after, the question emerged: Now what? Was anything else happening? Was there no other plan?

Anxiety briefly settled on those of us more prone to claustrophobic tendencies—we were in the midst of thousands, cordoned in by police who had begun to exercise tactics of intimidation with horses and riot gear. Intermittent waves of muted agitation were offset by amiable chatter with strangers and friends alike (usually #OWS related), a sighting of the hipster cop, and a rendition of Harry Dixon Loes’s “This Little Light of Mine,” sung by hundreds (thousands?) in unison. And because apparently no act of protest

is complete without a drum circle, one soon emerged (much to the discomfort of all others in the tightly-packed vicinity).

Every so often, a raving and indignant middle-aged man pushed through our group. “Next time,” he bawled, “don’t obey the police!” We were berated for our apparent rout: our refrain from shoving through the barricades, our cowardice at confronting the police lines, our unmistakable failure to act. Nettled by his accusation, I thought back to Monday’s impromptu march and the grumbling of the zombie protester: “This march needs more balls.” Did we? (Of course, more than thirty people were arrested but one street over.) What stood to be gained from our mere standing in place, en masse?

Later that evening, other criticisms of the Times Square convergence emerged, albeit from more reasoned voices: the act was disorganized, disjointed, there was no identifiable plan, no strategy—we had effectively *done* nothing. Instead, we should be directing our resources toward considered action. I nodded sympathetically; I agree. I still do. Though I noted a commonality among these various criticisms: an anxiety toward idleness. And it struck me that this idleness could potentially be redeemed. That acts of protest wouldn’t—needn’t—always meet a preordained objective or outcome, a prompt reaction or result, cause and effect. That by standing in Saturday’s crowd of thousands, or walking with Monday’s group of few, we were there fulfilling the movement’s imperative: We were taking up space, filling up time—and inaction, boredom, even listlessness would sometimes play a part, and they too have value. For these acts resonate in the realm of the symbolic, but they operate in the social too. Ideas exchange. New friendships emerge, old ones solidify. Restlessness foments action.

10:30pm

I make another round through Washington Square Park. Someone tells me the Guggenheim/BMW lab has been occupied. “They’re in there now, they’ve taken it. They’ve hung banners. They’re holding it down.” I wondered aloud whether they needed support, and walked on, looking to fact check. “Oh no, not yet,” a friend informs me, shaking her head. “That’s all set for tomorrow.” I pause to check in on Twitter. #OWS has posted the phone numbers of nearby pizza parlors.

11:05pm

A few friends have gathered around the stone benches on the fountain’s west side. A delivery man appears on a bicycle and unloads six large pizzas from his front basket. We sign the credit card receipt, being sure to add a substantial tip. I turn, scanning the park exits. It won’t be long now before the riot police arrive.

**DAY 19**  
**OCTOBER 5**

PENNY LEWIS

## Unions Coming

When asked to explain his union’s support for Occupy Wall Street, a spokesperson for the Transport Workers Union Local 100 said, “It’s kind of a natural alliance.” It is – and what’s incredible is that many more unions are saying the same thing.

It’s been a long time –since Seattle, 1999 –that so many US unions have thrown their support behind the kind of anti-corporate direct action we’re seeing in Zuccotti Park. Dozens, maybe hundreds, of locals; the internationals of AFSCME, SEIU, Teamsters, UAW, USW, among others; as well as the AFL-CIO itself—all have officially endorsed the protests. In its resolution of solidarity, TWU Local 100 hailed the courage of the protesters and described their occupation as a “dramatic demonstration of our own ideas.” And it’s true: runaway corporate greed, outrageous inequality, the corruption of our democracy—all are themes that have entered labor’s discourse these past few years since the

economy went bust. The AFL-CIO has targeted banks, SEIU has spent millions in its Fight for a Fair Economy campaign, coalitions have fought foreclosures and marched on financial centers and conventions. Unionized Wisconsin graduate students and community allies showed the power of an occupation, and in the process radicalized their brothers and sisters in the public sector there and beyond. Some of these public sector anti-austerity fights – like the one my own union has engaged – have challenged politicians and policies that give tax cuts to millionaires and just plain old cuts to us. These fights underscore why the unions stand in solidarity with OWS.

But the more frequent course unions have taken, even in these stark times (and even in some of these more radical moments) has been to avoid doing things that might put them “ahead” of the public, their members, or the politicians whose support they seek. To the extent that this more concessionary and defensive posturing has informed recent labor action, the explosion of support for Occupy Wall Street validates the actions of those in the movement who have been pushing it to push harder against the galloping kleptocracy we live in.

The question everyone’s asking is, where do we go from here? Right now, like most of the people I speak with, I’m just getting used to trusting that we are actually moving—that we are actually going somewhere—and I thank OWS for that.

I’m not worried that labor would—or could—co-opt this movement. It’s not going to have control over what OWS and its sister campaigns around the country does or do. It’s actually pretty great that unions don’t seem to want to control it and are still willing to embrace it. It’s a sign that labor appreciates the scope of the opening created here that they’re allying with groups whose culture and organizational style are so foreign to their own: the “99%” has proven to be spacious territory. To many in the labor movement, significant parts of the movements of the 1960s and 1970s frequently appeared to exist across a class or cultural divide. The labor movement itself has since changed, and the OWS movement, with economic grievances at its center, seems to have overcome such cultural hurdles to labor’s embrace, at least for now. Unions have pledged material support, delivered such support, and have come out in solidarity with OWS to protect it



PHOTO BY STANLEY ROGOUSKI



from police attacks, as well as the recent attempt to shut it down last week. It helps, enormously, that labor's solidarity with OWS has been a two way street from the get-go, and the drums and signs of Zuccotti park have fast become a presence in local labor struggles. The labor outreach working group in Zuccotti Park has brought the bulk of OWS to support locked out Teamsters at Sotheby's, join postal workers in their rallies against looming cuts, and picket Verizon headquarters with communication workers.

What I'm a little worried about is that too many unions will stop there, or not figure out how to go much further. I think it's great that unions are doing what they can, but our goal should not just be to keep OWS alive. It's to keep the spark they've lit alive and to generate the inspiration and sense of commitment they're modeling at OWS beyond the circles it's spreading to now. I think for us this means most of all among our own members and the communities we live in.

For all of the talk of a lack of clarity around OWS's "demands," as I hear it they've issued a clarion call: our interests are aligned against those of the plutocrats. This is not a sectional fight. It's not a fight to be won in the span of an election or the passage of a particular bill. But with great exceptions, for much of its history labor has fought sectional fights, and it's not in the habit of taking up class-wide demands. It has allied with Democrats, who helped get us into this mess, and frequently ended its political mobilization on election day. Labor does not have a good recent history of meaningful solidarity among its institutions, and in fact has recent history of infighting. As collective bargaining agents unions do face real constraints, but alternatives exist to these frequently narrow and I think shortsighted approaches.

So this is an incredible opportunity for more unions, and more layers of labor to re-align themselves. OWS has opened a political and educational space, and labor movement

organizations would be smart to make this much bigger and increase its leverage.

Stuart Appelbaum, President of the Retail, Warehouse, Department Store Union, said it well:

Every hour that Occupy Wall Street continues, it can help revitalize a progressive movement nationally and globally that aims to achieve new victories for all working people and the unemployed. It's up to us whether we harness their energy and commitment at the bargaining table, in the halls of government, and among the coalitions and alliances we try to sustain.

What would such "harnessing" look like? Maximal solidarity with each other, and real respect for the diversity of tactics across the movements—plural—that I hope will be gathering steam. In labor, such solidarity can't be top down exercises. From where I sit in labor education, even labor's "bottom up" initiatives too often take place around one-off mobilizations for particular campaigns, be they political or organizing, without deep commitment to sustained internal political education and external grassroots alliances. Like the public space and open air education

created at Zuccotti Park, unions are institutions that should provide the ongoing space and support for workers to collectively assess strategies used to make social change, revisit our history, and explore what people have done and are doing in other parts of the world to fight these same battles. Leaders need to trust and support members, and the rank and file needs to trust and build itself. It's a chance for us to rethink what we've been doing. To be adventurous and take risks, to reclaim our own history of direct action and civil disobedience. To put collective demands in front of particular demands, to risk political and economic capital on "other people's" fights. Because, it's not really "other people": We Are The 99%. And so is labor.

# MONEY

Doug Henwood

## MEND IT, DON'T END IT: SOME FACTS ON THE FED

I deeply admire, love even, the folks who've been camping in Zuccotti Park. They've brought attention to the issues of inequality and financier parasitism—facts of our life for the last 30 years at least—in ways that they haven't been since something like forever.

But allow me to file a bit of a worry. I have noticed some strange, Ron Paul-ish stuff about the Federal Reserve floating around OWS. Friends tell me that it's also been prominent at other Occupy events around the country.

The Federal Reserve is manna for conspiracists. It's an opaque institution that does work for the big guys. But it's not their puppet exactly. A friend who spent many years at the New York Fed once told me that within the institution, the consensus is that bankers are short-sighted critters who come and

go but the Fed has to do the long-term thinking for the ruling class. So it has more autonomy than the popular tales allow. Even if it is the ruling class.

The founding of the Fed is also a great subject of mythmaking—like secret meetings involving more than a few Jews. (The conspiratorial mindset often overlaps with anti-Semitic stories about rootless cosmopolitans, their greed and scheming. Greenspan. Bernanke. You'd almost forget that 1980s Fed chair Paul Volcker's middle name is Adolph.) There were some secret meetings, for sure, but the creation of a central bank was a major project of the U.S. elite for decades around the turn of the 19th century into the 20th. There's a great book on that topic by James Livingston—*Origins of the Federal Reserve System: Money, Class, and Corporate Capitalism, 1890-1913*—that I urge anyone interested in the topic to read. It was a long, complex campaign, and not the task of a secret junket to an island off the coast of Georgia.

It's complicated and messy to think about how financial markets work, and the Fed's relationship to those markets. Much easier to think of the Fed running the show. But in fact the Fed sometimes reacts to the markets, sometimes leads them, and on occasion fights with them.

In the 1980s, the Federal Reserve under Paul Volcker ran a very tight ship. It deliberately provoked a deep recession in 1981-82 by driving up interest rates toward 20% to scare the pants off the working class. The American elite thought the working class was too demanding and insolent and needed a good scare—and it worked. It was a very successful class war from above that led to a massive upward redistribution of income.

More recently, the Fed handed out massive amounts of money to the major banks with no strings attached—the figures are too mind-boggling, too big to actually cite. Something like this was necessary to keep everything from going down the drain, but it didn't have to be done so secretly and with no accountability. Banks were basically given blank checks to restore the *status quo ante bustum*. That's terrible. You could say the same for the TARP bailout—massive giveaways with no accountability or restrictions. This is all odious. But without the bailout, things would be even worse than they are.

More recently, though, Fed chair Ben Bernanke has been about the only major policymaker in the world pushing for more stimulus for the U.S. economy. He's not a partisan of austerity, like the Republicans or much of the pundit class: they want to see deep budget cuts, cuts that would almost certainly result in depression. The more honest among them say that the economy needs a good purgation—but they're not honest enough to say that that means doubling the unemployment rate from its present 9% to

PHOTO BY STANLEY ROGOUSKI



## DAY 21 OCTOBER 7

Astra Taylor

### Diary

October 7th

A young man, impersonating a carnival barker, invited me to step right up and write down how much I was worth to the banks. "How much money do you owe?" he shouted. "Come and tell us how

valuable you really are to the one percent." A small group of us gathered round, waiting for a turn to confess our debt on giant sheets of white paper. \$42,000 I wrote, my stomach sinking as I faced the number I usually keep at bay, since dwelling on it makes me panic. I handed the marker to the girl behind me, who looked to be in her early twenties. Next to her name she wrote \$120,000.

Since the sixties, the usual smear against protesters is that they are lazy hippies who should get a job, or privileged rich kids who don't have to work and therefore don't have a right to speak for the common person. They're hippies, weirdos, slackers. In 2011 these slurs don't have as much sway as they once did. Back then higher education was virtually free, unemployment was low, and

minimum wage, adjusted for inflation, was at a record high. Meanwhile the draft deferment college enrollment granted deepened class antagonisms. Today the cost of university has skyrocketed while it's been estimated that eighty-five percent of young people will have to move back home after graduating from college, weighed down by loans they may not ever be able to pay back. Makes me wonder: Would most people rather go back and live with mom and dad or camp somewhere like Zuccotti Park?

October 9th

I went down to the park around noon to see friends and also catch Zizek speak. I wanted to see if the human microphone was up for the challenge, and it totally

was. Impressive. Zizek, of course, brought out the hits, but they were appropriately contextualized, and he was quite rousing in the end. Nothing like hearing everyone echoing him twice: "George Soros is a chocolate laxative." He also said some stuff people need to hear, like acknowledging, for example, the fact leaderless movements usually still have leaders, they're just not out in the open. But he prefaced it by saying, "This may hurt some of your feelings, and I'm sorry," which was uncharacteristically sensitive of him.

Later I chatted with a fellow who has been part of OWS since the second planning meeting and was actually on the committee to find a spot to camp. In the last few days there has been constant

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**close to 20%. For this advocacy of stimulus, Bernanke's become an enemy of the right. They'd be happy to let things go down to prove a point.**

**We need to democratize the Fed, open it up, and subject money to more humane and less upper-class-friendly regulation. At the bare minimum this would mean opening up the Fed's deliberations, which are now mostly secret, to public scrutiny. It would mean subjecting the institution to audits, and to Congressional oversight. (While we're at it, it'd be nice to democratize Congress, too.) It would mean making the top offices into elected, rather than appointed, officials. It would mean transforming the current structure, that of an institution that's partly public and partly the creature of its member banks, into a fully public institution. It would mean bringing popular representatives onto its boards of directors, ending the current domination by bankers.**

**But even reforming the Fed could only do so much, as long as so much of our economic life is dominated by volatile financial markets, whose fundamental function is sucking as much of society's wealth into its upper reaches as it can get its mitts on.**

MEAGHAN LINICK

#### Citibank Arrest Video

[One of the most disturbing images to come out of OWS so far was an amateur video of a group of protestors getting arrested in a branch of Citibank in Union Square in New York. Shot by Meaghan Linick on her Blackberry, the video is bumpy and a bit hard to watch. The first ninety seconds show people locked inside the branch, the reflection of the bank's glass window distracting. Eventually, as Linick explains below, the action moves to the street, when a plainclothes police officer, quickly backed up by a phalanx of uniformed police, decides to arrest a young woman protester standing on the sidewalk, literally dragging her inside. The scene is puzzling and haunting; even the police seem disoriented. Lennick's video had been viewed nearly a million times.]

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On October 15th 2011 a few friends and I attended a rally of college students, high school students, teachers, professors in Washington Square Park, which was connected to the ongoing Occupy Wall Street protests in lower Manhattan—and now around the country and around the world.

After the rally, I heard that a few dozen people had decided to head over to the local Citibank branch to talk about their student debt and close their accounts. I thought one of my friends might be among them so I walked the few blocks to the LaGuardia Place branch of the bank.

As I arrived I saw Citibank security guards locking the doors to the bank.

Contrary to the Citybank PR statement, the cops were not yet on the scene when Citibank officials chose to lock the doors to the branch—effectively kidnapping those inside. Since I could see my friends were still inside the bank, I took out my Blackberry and began recording through the window.

An undercover, plain clothes police officer approached a woman standing next to me outside the window. He accused her of having been inside the bank and said she had to come with him. She repeated over and over "I'm a customer" and she held up her Citibank check book. Though it's not audible on the video, she also told him that she was just trying to close her account.

My voice on the video is proof I was shocked and shaken by what happened next. The woman, and the man standing next to her, were dragged inside the bank and arrested along with 22 other people who were locked inside.

I watched from the sidewalk as police dragged each person out one by one and loaded them into a line of paddy wagons. I could see that a few people were bleeding from their wrists where the police zip ties were cutting them.

I did not know the woman or man being arrested by the undercover cop in my video, but I desperately wanted to find them to give them the video to help with their court



VIDEO STILL BY MEAGHAN LINICK

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chatter about trying to start a second camp at Washington Square, but the problem, he explained, is that city parks close at midnight, which gives the police an excuse to boot people who try to sleep in them. Bizarrely, Zuccotti Park can be held because it's a private/public partnership and is officially open 24 hours a day. The park is a fluke city zoning rules. Developers get to build higher than they would otherwise be allowed if they provide public space as payback.

Today, I have to say, Zuccotti almost felt too full. Which is also why it's totally energizing and inspiring and, judging from this afternoon, the new tourist destination (though I think I saw somewhere this morning that Bloomberg said it was hurting tourism – definitely not true). If people overflow this park, what's the next step? I've heard that in Spain the big General Assembly dispersed/evolved into smaller neighborhood ones. Is it time for that here, or is it too soon? Could we pull such a thing off or is it not the right move? I don't know, but it's interesting to think about.

Also, I had a few conversations with people involved far more involved than I am that the General Assembly has become unwieldy now that there are so many

people involved in the protest. Some have proposed other methods of organization, like the spokescouncil model, which would introduce a bit of representation into the decision making process. Others, however, remain steadfastly committed to the pure vision of direct democracy the GA represents. So far I like the GA model, but I worry it's more exclusionary than its advocates admit, since you have to be there in person to participate and you have to be quite assertive. More than that, a goodly portion of the 99% don't have the time to attend two long meetings a day, and I'm sure many wouldn't want to attend them if they did. Also, as Zizek presciently warned, like every ostensibly leaderless movement, there seems to be things happening behind the scenes. From what I can tell decisions are being made by various committees and working groups and by a wide variety of autonomous actors, not just through publically deliberated group consensus. All things considered, I'm most sympathetic, and impressed, when I think of the general assemblies as a kind of political theater. On this level the GAs are absolutely brilliant, a vivid reminder of a kind of a democratic ideal our society seems to have totally abandoned.

cases. That night I uploaded my cell phone video to the Internet, which clearly showed two costumers being forcibly arrested. I was surprised to see that the people I had emailed the video to earlier, as well as others I didn't even know, had already uploaded the video to Youtube. Friends of mine that I was sending it to told me they had already seen it online. The woman who is arrested in my video even told me that her mother had found out from the internet that she was arrested before she got a chance to speak with her from jail. I also found out that C@b!n Cr3w (who are associated with Anonymous) had posted a statement in response to the video complete with Citibank CEO Vikram Pandit's personal information. I made sure to call his office today and leave a message for him with his secretary thanking him for the publicity.

The next day, October 16th, I went down to Central Booking in Manhattan for the arraignments of the 24 people arrested. They were in jail for almost 30 hours. Most were charged with disorderly conduct, but a few have more serious charges--including trespassing and resisting arrest.

After waiting four hours in the courtroom they were finally released, along with my other friends. Their hands and wrists were cut up from the roughness of the police and zip ties. Everyone who was in jail was tired, hungry, and mentally and emotionally exhausted from spending the night in a cell--but no one was deterred from participating in the Occupy movement.

I asked my friends what had happened inside and they told me that they had all agreed they would leave the bank when asked. That no one had had any interest in being arrested that day. In fact, the woman and man who are arrested in my video left the first time management asked them to. The people inside had all had thought, as citizens and as Citibank customers, they would be given a chance to leave the branch before action was taken against them. Sadly they were wrong.

I'm an underemployed recent college graduate with a degree in economics (of all things) and like many in my generation I have over \$50,000 in student loans. I'm currently working as a babysitter to try and pay the bills.



MOLLY CRABAPPLE,  
"FACES OF OCCUPIED  
WALL STREET"

#OWS

This is why I organize with Occupy Wall Street. Because I am part of the 99%--and if you're reading this, there's a 99% chance that you are too! The most beautiful thing about the Occupy Movement is that we can create, on a small scale, a version of the society in which we would like to live. A society with free education and health care--where democracy is participatory and real and our social relationships are founded on community, mutual aid, equality, respect, and solidarity.

If you believe that what is happening in this country is wrong, if you believe that as a society we can do better than this, then find an Occupy event in your city or town! And remember to bring your cell phone or video camera - you might just need it!

It's interesting, too, that every time I go down there there's more and more tension about the drumming. This sounds silly, but it's not. The drum circle, which was raging at 11am when I arrived and seems to go to 10pm without fail, has been appealed to everyday by the GA/other protesters, who want them to stop making noise for an hour or two a day so people can meet and discuss and assemble. The drum circle, however, just refuses to let up (someone said they heard one guy say, "We have been told by the GA there is a proposal to ask us to stop drumming, fuck that!"). There were many jokes made that the drummers are undercover cops engaging in sonic warfare, though I suspect something similar is being insinuated by drummers about the folks who want them to quit. I find it kind of a fascinating conflict. Right now they're coexisting, but honestly if you can't get your camping comrades to compromise with you, what hope is there?

And I just I got this from a friend:

*The drum circle: at GA the other day the Neighborhood Relations committee gave a report about how they'd attended a meeting of the neighborhood board, which was a little bummed out by the occupation*

*because (as the neighbors put it) they'd been here during 9/11, when their lives had been pretty radically disrupted, and now their neighborhood was being disrupted again, and also (said the neighbors) the tall buildings made the sounds from the park really resonate all around, which was annoying--but the neighborhood relations committee had managed to convince them not to pass a resolution against the occupation (and presumably the neighbors are old liberal New Yorkers who are fundamentally sympathetic to the occupation)--but it really made it sound rather tenuous. If the neighbors don't want the occupation there, that becomes a different story, really. Anyway: of course that drum circle's annoying!!*

October 11th

I actually made it to OWS for a bit today. Can't stay away. The first thing I noticed was a man with a large sign, "Google: Zionists Control Wall Street" and I cringed, briefly worried that creeps had taken over the occupation. A few minutes later I found myself talking to someone who has been camping there for the last few weeks and he mentioned, out of the

blue, that he thought the guy was an agent provocateur because his poster was getting more and more inflammatory with each passing day. About an hour later I was relieved to see two middle age women chasing the man around the park flanking him holding signs that read "Who pays this guy? He doesn't speak for me or OWS!" I cheered them on, as did others. The best thing, though, was when a small group of folks recognized my husband Jeff [Mangum], since we showed up a few nights ago and he sang some songs to those who wanted to listen. "Hey," a girl yelled as we were strolling through the park, "will you join sanitation?" So he spent a good amount of time in gloves sorting recycling. The entertainers should clean too. Now that's revolutionary.

Also, I just saw this on the Twitter feed:

OccupyWallStNYC  
#OCCUPYWALLSTREET

The drum circle will now be ceasing during #GeneralAssembly. The quiet this creates opened up space for a yogic meditation circle! #OWS

October 14th

From the Twitter feed:

JoshHarkinson  
#OCCUPYWALLSTREET

After victory today, a drummer played for 2.5 hours, .5 more than allowed. "2 hours was not enough for my soul," she said.

October 15th

So proud of people all around the world today! What images coming through the ether from other cities and countries. Times Square was redeemed tonight, full of people and passion (and a good number of very very confused tourists). Police, however, seemed determined to make it as unpleasant as possible (it was impossible to make it unpleasant, as people's spirits were too high, but they tried), ushering the contingent of about 100 people I was part of up to 46th street when we were walking down 42nd. I broke away and back tracked to find that other side streets were wide open and some Broadway blocks totally clear and passable. Despite this, the authorities crammed hundreds of us into one corner along with everyone else, where

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MALIHA SAFRI

# Globalizing Zuccotti

Critics ask, "What is the point of all this? What are the goals?" The answer from inside the Occupy Wall Street movement has often revolved around the process of the occupation itself, the process of becoming something else. Even friendly critics from the Left assert that this is not enough, that this is not transformative of capitalism, that the movement needs demands. I suggest we take a look at the economics of the occupation sites as a starting point for what we want: more of the kind of economy that is being created in those spaces.

OWS is a thriving commons of economic activity. Inside Zuccotti Park, and many other occupation sites, there is the production, consumption, and distribution of useful goods and services: the kitchen committee produces and distributes thousands of meals per day, the comfort committee produces clean laundry and clean bodies, the technology and open source committee is constructing a tech infrastructure, and so on.

All of these things could be purchased, but within OWS, they are being distributed on the basis of need rather than ability to pay. What kind of larger economic system could sustain more spaces like this?

Of course, Zuccotti Park is not wholly disconnected from the market—donated items were first purchased, food had to be produced elsewhere and sold by farmers before it was donated. But production will always involve inputs from other sites, under other conditions, and the OWS committees are already establishing connections with producers more in line with their vision of socioeconomic justice. The alternative economics group has begun conversations with cooperatives, credit unions, and community supported farms.

This presents us with a distinctly different model of economic development and integration, with some resemblance to the Quebecois social economy or the Brazilian solidarity economy models. In social movements, the alternative economy comprises a cooperative sector rich in complex institutions. These include worker-run firms; alternative financial institutions such as credit unions (essentially non-profit banks); alternative forms of housing finance, such as community land trusts, which eliminate real estate speculation; the production of immense value in the family (e.g. childcare, eldercare, healthcare, various forms of caring labor); et cetera. By demonstrating the ways in which these economic forms already exist in daily life, taking up major portions of people's labor and total time; social/solidarity economic movements have also staked a claim on state resources to support this alternative economy. In Quebec, four state funds totaling over \$58 million dollars were established exclusively for the social economy for housing, regional development, research, and expanding credit access. The Brazilian Solidarity Economy Forum received a \$3 million grant to undertake a 'census' of the alternative economy, allowing them to undertake specifically designed economic policies that would proliferate a worker-cooperative-based economy.

In Brazil, Quebec, Italy, Mexico and other nations' vibrant social economy movements, the goal is not to eliminate market mechanisms of distribution. Some goods we access through the gift economy, others through the market, and yet others through common provisioning (which may or may not coincide with state production). Some goods emerge from worker-managed sites in which workers also control the profit generated through market production, while other important goods are produced by capitalist firms. And in this alternative economic approach, we find a combination of market activity by alternative firms with agitation for some non-market

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of course tempers were prone to flare as we were packed cheek to jowl. The blockades and cavalry, it seems, were there to divide and disorient, not just to allow car traffic to flow. I noticed one very tiny older woman bedecked in 99% pins getting squished by the crowd, and after escorting her out the police wouldn't let me turn around and rejoin my group. Later that evening Washington Square was electric, well over

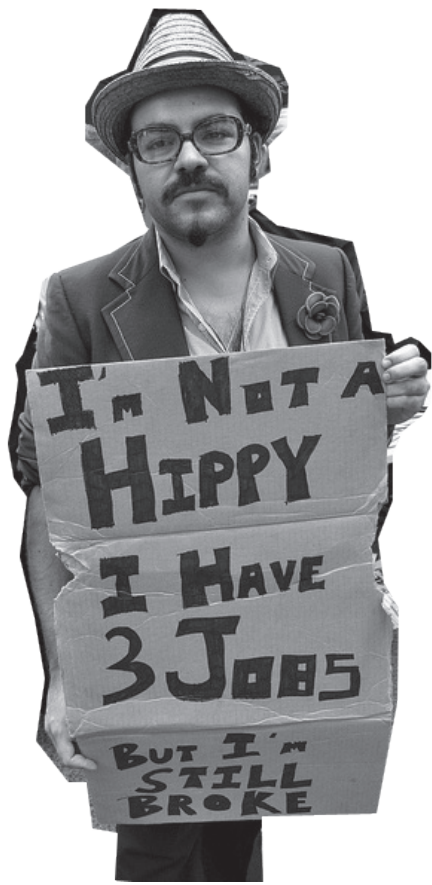


PHOTO BY STANLEY ROGOUSKI

a thousand people assembling, though I left before the riot cops began to descend. At two different junctures over the course of the evening haters told my friends and I to "get a job." Aren't people protesting, among other things, the fact there aren't enough of those, especially decent paying meaningful ones?

Which makes me think of one of my favorite slogans I've seen so far: "I lost my job but found an occupation." Accusations, predictably, fly from some quarters that protesters are lazy, but of course that's not the case. It may not be the kind of thing that gets remunerated with a paycheck or can go on a resume, but OWS may be some of the most important work being done today. Maybe one of the demands should be a jobs bill where all the jobs are really worth doing.

#### October 16th

This afternoon I heard there were plans brewing to seize space for a second occupation. The site: the BMW/Guggenheim Lab, a temporary corporate-sponsored space housed in a large community garden on Houston Street near Second Ave.

I first heard about the idea four days prior, when I got the following email from a friend

*hey y'all  
so I got word that last night at the ows art & culture meeting an announcement was made that the committee was invited to present at BMW Lab...seems like that Lab might need some sleeping bags ...it is slated to CLOSE for good on OCTOBER 16 (four days from today) so maybe that*

distribution. For instance, in Brazil, cooperatives run and managed by workers exist side by side with the 1.5 million members of the Landless Workers' Movement (the MST), who have achieved considerable success in expropriating farmland for subsistence use.

In Italy, where there is no official state support or subsidy for the alternative economy as in Brazil, the movement for economic justice created a parallel system of self-planning and network formation separate from the state. For instance, rather than receiving a generous fund like the Brazilians to undertake a massive census, the Italian network created a self-managed database in which new entrants register themselves through a snowballing method.

How could we organize the entire economy to look like Zuccotti Park? For some, the task would be best done by the government. One of the park's remarkable features is that everything is accessible to all, and we can begin to imagine a larger-scale commons: public health care, free university tuition, unconditional basic income. These goods would be provided by the government. Others believe that a new commons would be best established outside of the government, producing common goods by way of community organizations and labor/syndicalist movements. This would mean an alternative economy within the interstices of a capitalist system. Workers throughout the world are demonstrating how production can be accomplished in a more humane manner, empowering those who work and those who consume through the very arrangement of production.

Marx has often been criticized for not coming up with a detailed vision of what communism would entail. But he

*can be turned into occupier housing and neighborhood assembly meeting spot*

Though further from Wall Street, the site was ideal in many ways. The Lab was equipped with a kitchen, eating area, covered shelter, and several bathrooms. The park itself was spacious and highly visible.

Would-be occupiers made plans to show up during the closing party, which was supposed to end at 10:30. General Assembly, they promised, would start at 10:31. When I arrived a little after 9pm, however, the celebration was already shut down, the plot foiled. The DJ was packing up, the garbage bags were being filled, security had emptied everyone out, and a cop car was parked outside with the lights flashing. About thirty people still milled around on the sidewalk, some with sleeping bags tucked under their arms. They seemed in good spirits though they'd have to sleep elsewhere.

I, for one, was disappointed there wasn't more of a showdown, if only to call attention to the situation's irony. As my friend's email made clear, the team behind BMW/Guggenheim Lab had been eager to glom onto OWS. For example, only a few days ago the Lab had offered a Wall Street Occupation Tour. "Public spaces have

been contested throughout the history of New York," the calendar page explained. "Now hundreds of activists are camped out in the heart of the Financial District. What are the written and unwritten rules that govern how we use public spaces? How have they changed over time? What happens when activists contest those rules? Join us on a tour from the BMW Guggenheim Lab to the Financial District, where we will interview occupation participants and consider the past, present, and future of the commons." On another website an article published with the Lab's imprimatur analyzed the Zuccotti Park encampment as an "ecosystem," lavishing praise on the ingenious compost and trash systems, the well-stocked library, and the spirit of volunteerism. "Rather than a protest," the article enthused, "Occupy Wall Street is an inspirational model for an alternative future."

Inspirational from a distance, of course. But when the occupy ecosystem reached their doorstep, BMW/Guggenheim called the police. They would not let the party become a protest. And so the demonstrators drifted off into the night. I hope they come back and try again, if not at this park, then elsewhere, everywhere.



PHOTO BY STANLEY ROGOUSKI

understood that the process of political change would transform the very horizons of the thinkable. In refutation of the neoliberal mantra "to each according to her ability to pay," thousands of us (some sleeping in the park, and others giving every spare moment after work, and maybe even stealing time from work) are straining to produce according to our ability, for the needs of ourselves and others. The effort doesn't just produce meals and workshops and culture, it intimates a new economic model. It embodies on a micro-scale the macro-scale changes we seek.



MICHAEL SMITH

## Bloomie Blinks

My daughter and I got up at the crack of dawn—before it, actually—and went downtown to join the Wall Street occupiers in anticipation of Bloomberg’s 7 AM cleanup, announced yesterday. We arrived about 5:30.

I had been quite apprehensive about it. I used to be a bold fellow about this sort of thing, but age has made me timorous; and though the NYPD were always brutes, they’re a lot worse now—too numerous, too heavily equipped with expensive lethal toys, and too eager to use them: and the human material of the force seems much more twisted, degraded, and malevolent than it was twenty years ago.

Still: somebody once said that 90% of life is just showing up, and I felt that if I didn’t show up for this show-down it would be even harder than usual to look at myself in the mirror. And my daughter, who’s been hanging out with the occupiers for the last few days, was also eager (though also apprehensive). So there was no choice, really.

I felt a lot better as soon as I turned the corner and saw the crowd. There were lots of people there, and more streaming in along with us. I’m no good at estimating crowd size, but the square, which is not small, was chockfull and shoulder-to-shoulder, and spilling out onto the sidewalks and streets nearby.

As always, a very young crowd, though there were a few grizzled old stagers like myself. The crowd was very revved-up and full of beans, and at the same time calm and resolute. They were clearly determined to stand their ground as best they could, but one felt none of the crazy chaotic energy of a mob.

There was a look on so many of these young faces that was really beyond praise. How my old heart went out to them. It’s been a while since I’ve felt this pleased to be a member of our peculiar species.

Some union contingents arrived while we were there and they were lustily cheered.

There was some tension in the air as the 7 AM deadline approached. A speaker was trying to circulate information about legal aid and sort out those willing to be arrested from those not; the willing were to stay in the park, the others to retire to the sidewalks adjacent and lend moral support and bear witness. I was trying to figure out whether I was among the willing or not.

I’ll never know; Bloomberg blinked. The speaker broke off and then read a communique from City Hall: the cleanup had been postponed.

It was a fine moment; people cheering, hugging each other and so on.

Okay, so it wasn’t Stalingrad. I expect we’ll see a lot of dubious Eeyorish head-wagging about the long road ahead, about the difficulty of ‘building’—what? Whatever.

JEREMY KESSLER

## To the Men and Women of the New York City Police Department:

Last night, we learned that because of the complaints of Brookfield Properties, the company that owns Zuccotti Park, Mayor Bloomberg has ordered the Occupy Wall Street protesters to remove themselves and their supplies from the Park at 7 AM tomorrow. If the protesters don’t leave, Bloomberg likely will order you and your colleagues to forcibly remove and arrest the men and women who have come there to protest the policies, politicians, and financial leaders responsible for the continuing economic crisis. As concerned citizens, we ask you not to follow this order.

Bloomberg and Brookfield Properties claim that the protesters must be removed in order to clean the Park. Anytime thousands of people assemble in a small space, it is not easy to keep things neat. The Occupy Wall Street protesters, however, have shown their desire to maintain a safe and sanitary environment. They have organized sanitation and medical teams to remove trash, clean blankets and sleeping bags, and treat the sick and injured. They also have committed themselves to a sober, nonviolent, and respectful public assembly. As in any crowd, there are some who make the lives of police personnel harder than they ought to be. But as the police assigned to the Park over the last month can attest, the vast majority of protesters are peaceful, passionate, and good-humored. They have come to the park not to wreck property or insult hardworking citizens. They have come to the park because they believe in a fair shake, and know they haven’t gotten it.

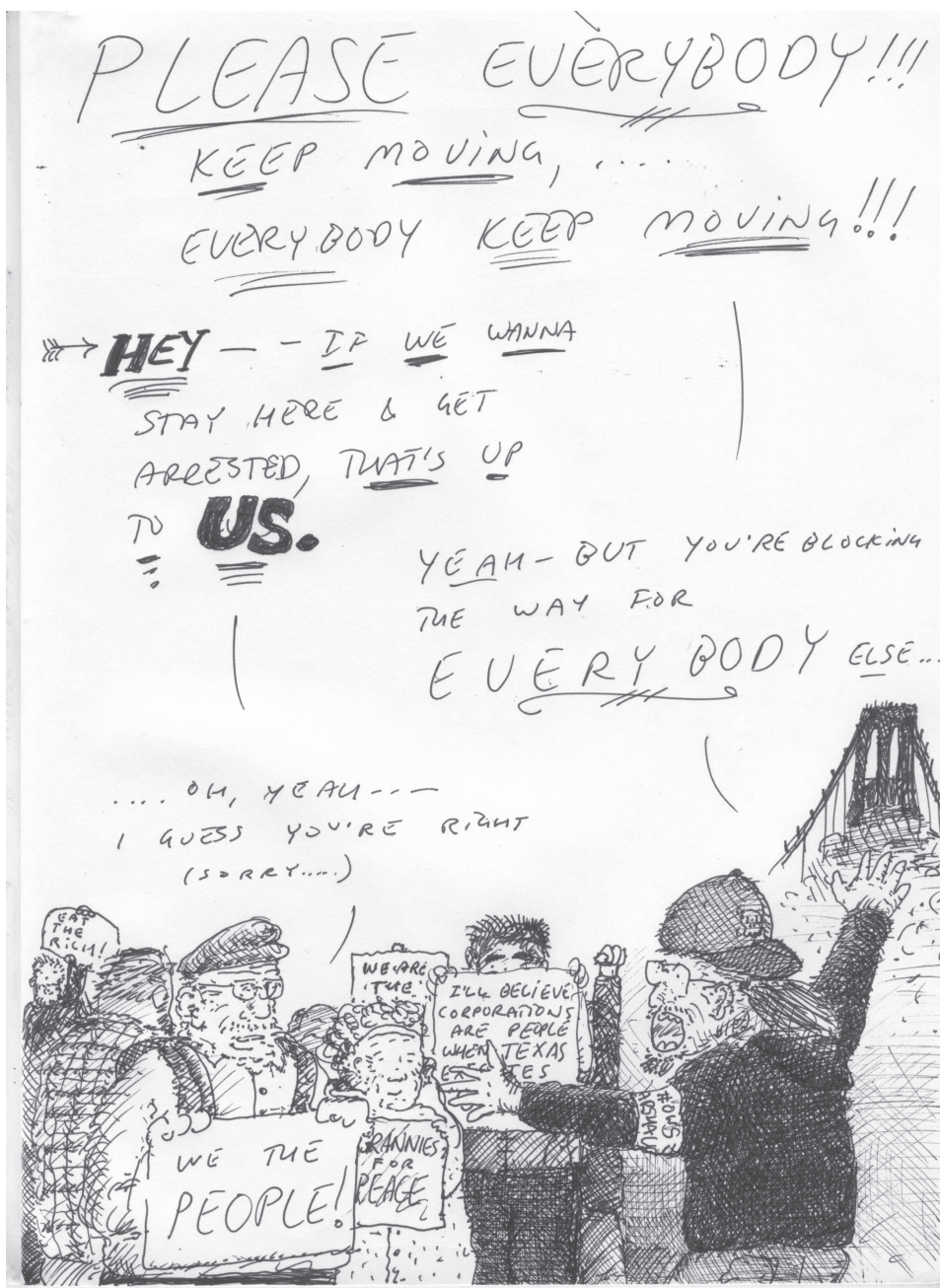
Mayor Bloomberg and Brookfield Properties claim that the Occupy Wall Street protest will be able to continue—only without food, medicine, or shelter—after the Park is clean. This is not true. The purpose of the Occupy Wall Street protest is to secure a public space at the center of the American financial system in which ordinary Americans can speak and be heard. When 20,000 protesters marched on Wall Street in May, nobody listened. The reason why Occupy Wall Street has attracted so much attention and gained the support of workers and unions across the nation is because it has held its ground. Unlike the national politicians who caved to the financial elites when they demanded special treatment and the local politicians who caved to a billionaire mayor when he wanted another term, the Occupy Wall Street protesters have not caved. But without food, medicine, and shelter, the protesters will not be able to continue their peaceful assembly.

American citizens have a right to assemble in public in order to communicate with one another and with their elected leaders. The right to public assembly is not a right to assemble for a second, or an hour, or a day. As Americans, we have a right to assemble until we are satisfied that our voices have been heard, and that our leaders are sustaining, not destroying, our safety and our livelihoods.

Across the country, political leaders have cut public services and laid off public employees, including police, because of the economic crisis that has engulfed us. That crisis is not ending anytime soon. Unemployment is at about 9 percent and will remain there for some time—unless another recession hits, in which case it will continue to rise, putting further strain on public services and dooming an entire generation of workers and their families to a lifetime of economic uncertainty. The people who are threatened by this ongoing crisis are not strangers to the New York Police Department. They are your friends and neighbors, your children and your parents.

Last winter, when Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker tried to crush organized labor, the police realized that Walker was not their friend, even though he tried to buy them off. Tracy Fuller, the executive board president of the Wisconsin Law Enforcement Association, wrote: “I specifically regret the endorsement of the Wisconsin Trooper’s Association for Gov. Scott Walker. I regret the governor’s decision to ‘endorse’ the troopers and inspectors of the Wisconsin State Patrol. I regret being the recipient of any of the perceived benefits . . . I think everyone’s job and career is just as significant as the others. Everyone’s family is just as valuable as mine.” In New York City as in Wisconsin, a collapsing economy and the politicians who feed it with short-term austerity measures imperil us all.

Mayor Bloomberg and Brookfield Properties do not want to rid Zuccotti Park of dirt. They want to rid it of the Americans who have assembled there to peacefully protest the way people like Governor Walker, Mayor Bloomberg, and the owners of Brookfield Properties treat their fellow citizens. We understand that as the police of New York City you have jobs to do and families to support. We understand that you respect the law. We respect the law, too. But at times in American history, the law has been shamefully used by those in power to suppress the voices of peaceful Americans. An order to disperse the Occupy Wall Street protesters is an order to suppress their voices and their vision of a fairer America. The Mayor seeks to silence thousands of Americans in order to enforce the property rights of a wealthy few. There is no better example of the kind of moral corruption that has led thousands of Americans to come to Zuccotti Park. Every religion, every ethical code, recognizes that there are times when the commands of self-interested officials are not worthy of obedience. Tomorrow morning is such a time. We appeal to your conscience as men and women and to your sense of justice as American citizens. If you are ordered to disperse the Occupy Wall Street protesters, please refuse.



DAVID KEARNS, "OCCUPATION SKETCHBOOK"

An acquaintance of mine recently reminded me of a trenchant passage in *The Civil War in France*, speaking of the Communards of Paris:

They have no ideals to realize, but to set free the elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant. In the full consciousness of their historic mission, and with the heroic resolve to act up to it, the working class can afford to smile at the coarse invective of the gentlemen's gentlemen with pen and inkhorn, and at the didactic patronage of well-wishing bourgeois-doctrinaires, pouring forth their ignorant platitudes and sectarian crotchets in the oracular tone of scientific infallibility.

Old Charlie was no dope.

Not Stalingrad, okay. But it's been a long time since the Ringwraiths of Mordor-on-Hudson even had to rein in their nightmare steeds momentarily. And I don't think anybody who was in the square today will soon forget how they stared down the iron juggernaut just by being there.

There are more of us than there are of them. It's a priceless insight, and the foundation of everything else.

SARAH LEONARD

## Park to Park

Thursday night, the occupation was threatened by a Bloombergian assault by sanitation crew—Liberty Plaza must be powerwashed! It was all full of hippies, and the park's corporate owners issued a bizarre letter asking for police aid in washing it down to prevent a "public health risk." The occupiers responded by scrubbing the living hell out of the park, top to bottom, east to west, so that all night the plaza smelled like vinegar. The call went out for supporters to show up in the early morning en masse to defend the park.

And so we did, legal aid number scrawled on skin, no valuables, hundreds and hundreds of people ready to risk arrest for the birthplace of a movement sweeping the country. And as everyone was warned of the risks via the people's mic, word came from corporate headquarters: the cleaning had been postponed. A cheer went up. Our bodies had been enough this time, and we decamped to occupy breakfast and watch a disappointed NY1 reporter on television, trying to salvage a story from this gloriously solidaristic non-arrest.

### Debate

Friday night was all about the packed discussion at Bluestockings, hosted by the young magazine *Jacobin*, unofficially

a contentious faceoff between anarchists and socialists and the direction of the emerging movement. The moderator, *Jacobin* editor-at-large Seth Ackerman valiantly held a sort of peace between panelists who rapidly shifted in demeanor from comrades to antagonists. The anarchists, *New York Times* freelance reporter Natasha Lennard and writer/editor Malcolm Harris of *The New Inquiry* and *Jacobin*, talked about the liberated subjectivities emerging in the chaotic now. The other side of the table—economics journalist Doug Henwood, editor of Democratic-Socialist paper *The Activist* Chris Maisano, and political theorist Jodi Dean—argued variations on the need for greater organization, for achievable political goals based in communalism, and for some sort of engagement with the state.

The debate was lively, rife with condescension in both directions, and did feel, comfortingly, like a throwback to a time when politics mattered. When Lennard argued that the power with which the protesters should concern themselves was not that of the state or of finance, but the Foucauldian power that "coded" us all and inscribed neoliberalism into our very being, Henwood retorted that he suspected people wanted jobs, "not to re-code their heads." When Maisano suggested recruiting students to the cause at local colleges, Lennard leaned forward eagerly. "Recruitment? Don't you think that's a bit fascistic?" A little part of me died right there, and I thought Henwood was going to choke.

Regardless, the anarchists perhaps find greatest joy in the movement, and people who actually know how to organize will be critical to its future. An essay by Michael Walzer came to mind, where he argues that our utopia on the Left resides in the movement itself. Something about the debate's focus on different sets of ideals, and real inability to talk about concrete next steps, felt like it was forgetting that joy and construction are often two sides of the same coin. As Walzer says about the eternal fight for social democracy, "the goodness is in the work as much as in the benefits—so it doesn't matter if the work goes on and on, as it does. It is important and worthwhile work because of its mutuality, because of the talents and capacities it calls forth, and because of the moral value it embodies. That work is socialism-in-the-making, and that is the only socialism we will ever know."

### Times Square

Saturday afternoon I had family in town from Boston, so naturally I brought them to Occupy Wall Street, where they mingled in the euphoric Saturday crowd at Zuccotti, and some anarcho-capitalists gave my little sister propaganda about gold and fiat currency.

Later, we headed up to Times Square to join an energetic demonstration, contained within a series of fenced-in police pens along Seventh Avenue from 42<sup>nd</sup> to 45<sup>th</sup> streets. Arriving demonstrators were instructed to walk on the sidewalk between the buildings and the barriers, until they came upon one of the narrow entrances to a pen. Each pen took up about half of the avenue's width, allowing cars to pass on the other side. The stream of 99%ers crushed slowly slowly through this corridor. But

with joy! Lots of chanting and singing; my fourteen-year-old sister joined in a rousing chorus of "Banks got bailed out! We got sold out!" and we all did an NBC television interview. When hundreds of people came marching and chanting down a side street, causing police to hustle barriers out of their way, my sister stood on the corner grinning.

As night fell, the cops, who had been content to politely tell us to "move along" all afternoon (pausing on the sidewalk was forbidden) arrived in force, apropos of nothing I could see, and the whole mood shifted and darkened. From the happy, empowered crowd you could suddenly hear murmurs of discontent as dozens of cops began to line the barricades, facing in toward the protesters. We really did feel indignant. This swelled to a full-on wave of disgust as a mounted force cantered in on those enormous, identical horses that feel less predictable, and therefore more frightening, than the motorcycles. Then the motorcycles came too, with cops in leather jackets. Then cops in helmets. A regular battalion of backups trotting up the street. When I asked the white shirt in front of me if this wasn't a bit much, he shrugged and smiled, then gestured to someone back in the crowd who had climbed some scaffolding. "Could you please tell him to come down? I don't want to see anybody get arrested." Then came the truck with more barriers and a man on top of the truck to film us, and a number of plain clothes emerged from the crowd to join the now-militarized corridor that was the other side of the barricades.

This insane, amped-up policing of the protest has become par for the course, but I have to say, seeing a double row of cops facing my fourteen-year-old sister, roundabout 5'4" and enjoying her first big party for social justice, was unnerving. A moment ago, I wouldn't have thought twice about having brought her to a peaceful march. Now I looked at all these cops and thought that the last time we had faced off together, they had pepper-sprayed a bunch of kids who wanted to march on a public street, Wall Street, and had beaten them with batons and zipcuffed them and thrown them on the pavement.

For a while, the crowd played with the cops, chanting "give the cops a raise!" and trying to make conversation over the barriers. A group to my right, identifying the name "Schmidt" on a nametag, burst into frat-like chants of "Schmidty! Schmidty! Schmidty!" while the young man in question valiantly fought down smiles. I discussed with a friend Wall Street's penchant for gambling union pensions in an optimistically cop-oriented teach-in. Eventually we left, and heard later that dozens were arrested for unruly behavior of some sort.

As we walked down Sixth Avenue, a contingent of protesters passed us, chanting enthusiastically. A man out with his wife shouted at them, "get a job!" to which most of them yelled back, "I have a job!" "Well," he blustered, "get another one!"

### Washington Square Park

Later Saturday night, everyone reconvened in Washington Square Park for a big General Assembly, calm and

well-organized, run through people's mic and a "progressive stack". Cops at the park entrances warned arrivees of its midnight closing time.

Debate raged over whether protesters could hold the park and whether it was a good target. One NYU student suggested that if everyone took the park, NYU students would emerge from the surrounding buildings to help. Eyebrows shot upward. Consensus seemed to be emerging that the park was too big to hold, so I took a little wander around as the midnight hour of confrontation drew nigh.

There were little contingents of blue-jacketed NYPD Community Affairs people all over and white shirts who made periodic announcements reminding the assembled protesters of the curfew. But the spectacle of force was under the white triumphal arch on the north side of the park. Several rows of helmeted police stood in formation, ready to march into the park at the stroke of midnight. It was tiring to see all this again, probably tiring for everyone, and most protesters headed peacefully out of the park, many marching back to Liberty Plaza to maintain the occupied space. "Let us raise a standard to which the wise and the honest can repair," reads the arch. "The event is in the hand of God." Thus spake George Washington to the Constitutional Convention, another discursive assembly of sorts, albeit with a considerably less progressive stack and no anarchists. It was a pleasure to see protesters disperse not swept before a wave of pepper spray, but for tactical reasons, after reaching a thoughtful and reasoned democratic consensus, or as near one as possible, and trucking back to home base to fight another day.

**DAY 29**  
**OCTOBER 15**

## Onnesha Roychoudhuri *Scenes From an Occupied New York*

1) \$700 billion dollars of taxpayer funds went to bail out failing banks. 14 million Americans want jobs but can't find them. Corporate profits just hit an all-time high. CEO pay has gone up 300 percent since 1990; "production worker" pay has gone up 4 percent. The top 1 percent of Americans owns 42 percent of the wealth and 50 percent of all stocks and bonds. Glance just slightly further down the top of that food pyramid and you find that the top 10 percent owns over 90 percent of stocks and bonds while the top 20 percent owns 93 percent of the wealth.

Being accurate does not always make you interesting. You may be good at math yet miss the fact that you are part of the statistics. (You, after all, have a microwave, coffeemaker and refrigerator. You are doing just fine.) Knowing how to parse inequality does not

necessarily equip you to fight it. You count sheep to go to sleep. You count until you start to get the sense that you may be one of them. Then, you go to Liberty Plaza to occupy Wall Street.

2) We are a slow-moving thing. Necessarily so. Microphones, speakers and bullhorns will get you thrown in prison for up to 30 days. The human microphone system requires people to speak in fragments that can be repeated to the ends of the crowd amassed in Liberty Plaza. We collectively speak someone else's words before deciding whether or not we agree with them. Many of the signs, too, are meant to be read with patience. There's a density of text that won't be picked up by cameras hungry for a sound bite. They attest, in irregular lettering, to a singular life lived, and the financial challenges that cause a sputtering, a sleeplessness, an unrecoverable grappling. Or, conversely, they advertise a home owned, a life lived, a happy retirement. An endangered species marching behind barricades to testify to its near-mythical existence.

3) What are your demands? We understand that solutions can be expensive. At the store, we are faced with choices constantly. Organic, free-trade, products sold under the moniker "If You Cared." If we cared, we'd open our wallets just a little bit wider. All the options veil a terrifyingly narrow conclusion: You cannot afford to be a good person. Worse: In an era of corporate personhood, it's

possible that you cannot afford to be a person at all.

4) Liberty Plaza is a fleshly now. A jostling of bodies in an as-yet solutionless spectacle. The truth being testified to, for now, rests in the recognition that there are no easy solutions. The refusal of the channels for redress available to us. None of the above.

New York City has the highest population density in the United States. Yet we are an incredibly well-behaved bunch. We take our trains to work, and go home to our small apartments to face off with the resident roaches or the leaden footsteps of upstairs neighbors, occasionally stopping off first at the local bar for a drink with friends. But something interesting happens when we do not return to our apartments. We become visible. If there is one thing people across the world have come to expect, it is for people to lose interest, for things to come to an end. But the carnival, the spectacle, the autonomous zone of immediacy continues.

5) Picture this: A young woman's face, her dark hair pulled back so that we can better see the glitter on her face. Her fist is in the air, her mouth open in a chant. She is young, beautiful, her face rigid with conviction. But pan out and you'll see what illuminates her: the lights of Times Square. An icon for Facebook lodged behind the crown of her head like a co-opted thought bubble, and, in front of her face, the outsized

gamine legs of a lingerie model. That thousands of people should converge on Times Square with its giant billboards, the Mecca of American consumption, seems fitting for a movement sparked by the culture-jamming periodical, AdBusters. Yet there's a palpable treading of water here, a reckoning with the ambiguity and inclusivity of the movement. Tourists get corralled inside the barricades, taking a few photos before trying to maneuver their shopping bags through the protesters. Some occupiers of Liberty Plaza have made their way here in suits. The classic call and response starts: "Whose streets?" but some reply "Wall Street" instead of "Our streets." At the barricade's edge, a chant begins, directed at the police who have gathered on horseback: "You. Are. The 99 percent."

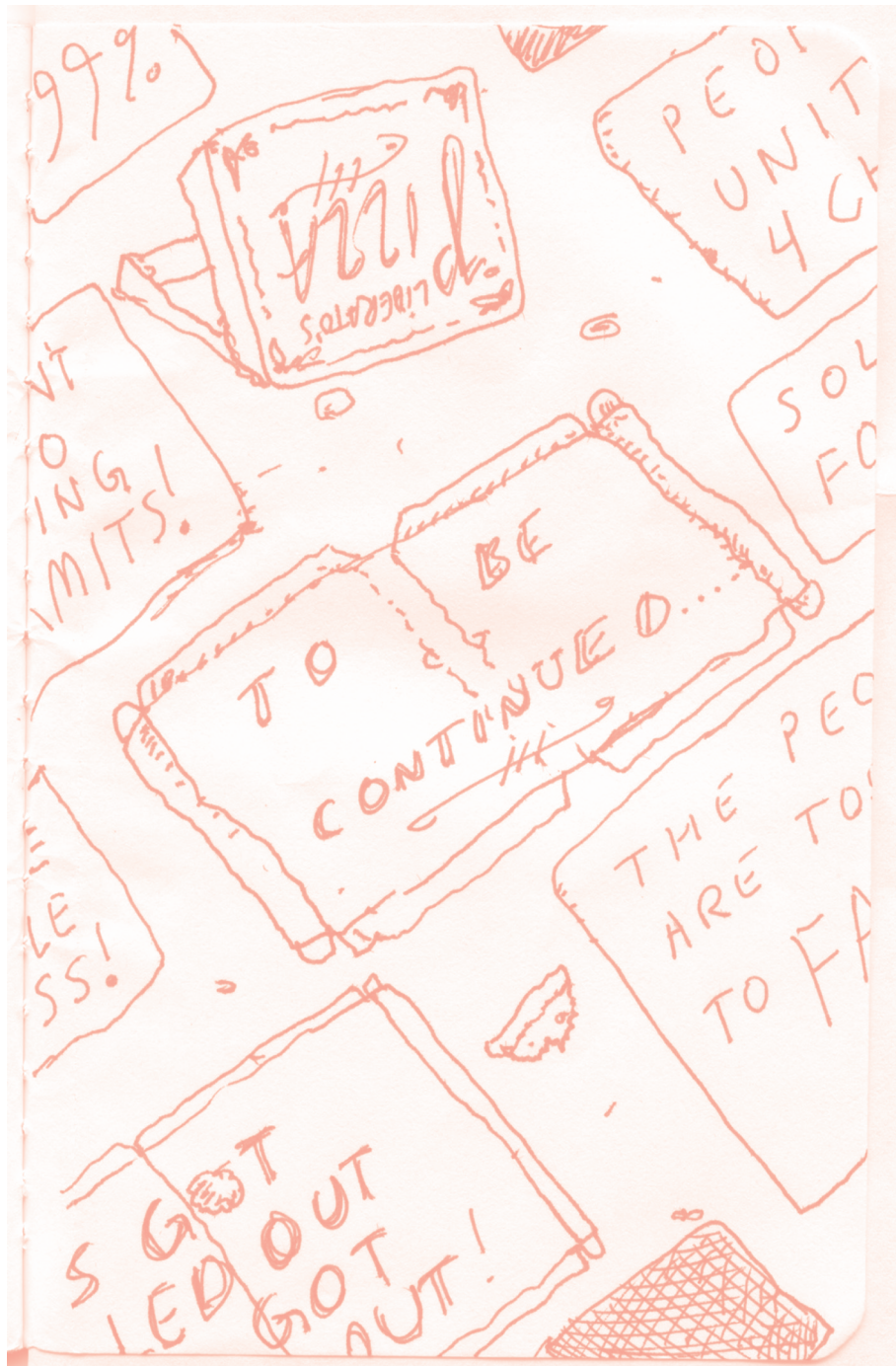
6) Outside the throngs, on Broadway at 48<sup>th</sup> street, two women from out of town make their way back to their hotel. "All they are is a nuisance with no fucking jobs."

This seems entirely the point of the protests. Though they are undoubtedly part of the 99 percent, the women do not identify with the protesters, their cynicism palpable.

7) Contemporary cynicism is a kind of universal skepticism, elevating disbelief to a kind of blind faith that no faith can be had. Think of its presence, then, as an important indicator of the health of a democracy, a reflection of the inability of social and political institutions to fulfill the needs of the people.

Now, think of the groups of citizens around the world gathering to perform the kind of democracy those in power have come to think of as a naïve fairytale, laying a trail of breadcrumbs to what is necessary, what must be.

8) As the sun sets, the lights from ever-changing advertisements washes faces in the crowd with streams of shifting colors. As if to draw a line between the real and artificial, the flesh-and-blood bodies and those photoshopped bodies scaling the sides of buildings, sparklers are lit, and held above heads. A song breaks out: This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. Then, the human mic clears its throat: "Mic check!" The message conveyed goes like this: The police would like everyone to relocate. "We will accommodate them," we chant in waves. "We want to go." Except, many don't, and even as we serve to amplify the message, people look at each other, wondering where this message originated. Some sit down on the sidewalks, the momentum suddenly diffused. In the distance, smaller clots of the disbanding crowd continue to chant, the sounds bleeding together, a kind of slowing heartbeat proclaiming "Now, Now, Now" and, in the quiet between the beats, another word seems to take shape: "What? What? What?"



DAVID KEARNS,  
"OCCUPATION  
SKETCHBOOK"

# OCCUPY

# EVERY-

# WHERE

Sunaura Taylor

## OCCUPY OAKLAND

I just woke up in my tent at Occupy Oakland. This is the first night my husband and I (and our dog) have camped out here, and although I can't say we slept well over the sounds of the city and people talking into the early hours of the morning, we woke up still deeply enthused and excited to be part of such an event in Oakland.



We've been stopping by the encampment pretty regularly since it started last Monday. It's in downtown Oakland, in Frank Ogawa Plaza, which is right in front of the city hall. Within hours of the protest starting, there were signs renaming the location. The new name: Oscar Grant Plaza.

Frank H. Ogawa was a Japanese American who was a long time Oakland City Council Member. He had served time during WWII in a concentration camp. He died while the plaza was being renovated and so it was renamed in his honor. Oscar Grant was a young African American man who was fatally shot by BART ( Bay Area Rapid Transit) police on New Year's Day, 2009. The case, which made headlines nationwide, has become a symbol of the city's problem of police brutality and racial inequality. The movement for justice that has emerged from Oscar Grant's shooting has no doubt played a powerful role in how Occupy Oakland has been organized.

It was clear from the first signs that went up at the encampment, and the first organizers who spoke, that Oscar Grant Plaza was going to be as much about addressing and healing Oakland's wounds as it was about uniting the 99%. This was not going to be an encampment that ignores issues of race, class, nationality and gender—and as I've found out over the past few days, in at least some ways, they've also been trying to address issues of disability.

Although I'm the only wheelchair user I've seen staying at the camp (which doesn't mean I necessarily am), the Bay Area's disability community has been coming out to support the events and participate in the protest. This weekend over 2,500 people made it to Oscar Grant Plaza for a march and rally calling for "Jobs Not Cuts." Among the protesters were many individuals from various unions, including SEIU. CUIDO, a radical activist group made



DAN ARCHER, "OCCUPIED OAKLAND"

up of disabled people and allies, was also present. CUIDO, which stands for, Communities United In Defense of Olmstead (a landmark court decision that declared that disabled people have a right to live in their own communities), is no stranger to protest encampments. In the summer of 2010, dozens of members of CUIDO camped out in tents on a median in Berkeley to protest the proposed budget cuts to services poor, elderly and disabled folks rely on. Arnieville (named after our then governor Arnold Schwarzenegger) was a remarkably accessible tent city and thrived for over a month.

Although Oscar Grant Plaza has yet to be as accessible to a broad range of disabled people as Arnieville, I've been pleasantly surprised by how an awareness of disability has been at least somewhat present over the past week. Ableism was mentioned during the General Assembly meeting as an

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# Occupy Atlanta

[This essay was originally written as a letter to Occupy Atlanta; it also appeared on Colorlines.com on October 13, 2011.]

Occupy Wall Street and its offshoots have been catching flak for being so white. Occupy Atlanta is no exception, getting off to a rough start last Friday when civil rights movement hero-turned-Congressman John Lewis stopped by to offer his support, only to be waved off by the mostly white General Assembly, the Occupy movement's collective decision-making group. Congressman Lewis was extremely gracious. Others, less so.

In a town that is majority black, Occupy Atlanta moved quickly to make amends. The occupiers renamed their campsite Troy Davis Park on Sunday, in honor of what would have been Troy Davis's 43rd birthday. They apologized, explaining that the democratic process of ordering speakers is crucial to the movement. They extended an invitation to John Lewis to return.

Getting it right about race is important for the Occupy movement everywhere, but especially here in Georgia, where there is nothing subtle about the relationship between race, corporations and the government. Georgia's government was created by and for plantation farmers, the original 1 percent, running antebellum corporations. And that 1 percent has been using everything in its power, most notably the criminal justice system, to hold on to its centuries-old gains.

Occupy Atlanta is still braving the elements today in Woodruff Park, a green space in the middle of downtown Atlanta. Many in and around the Occupy movement have been asking how we can talk about corporate control of government, economics and race all in the same breath. Considering the history of Woodruff Park, we have to wonder how we can talk about it any other way. Here, I offer a crucial primer for the full history of this occupied space.

Occupied Atlanta, 1865

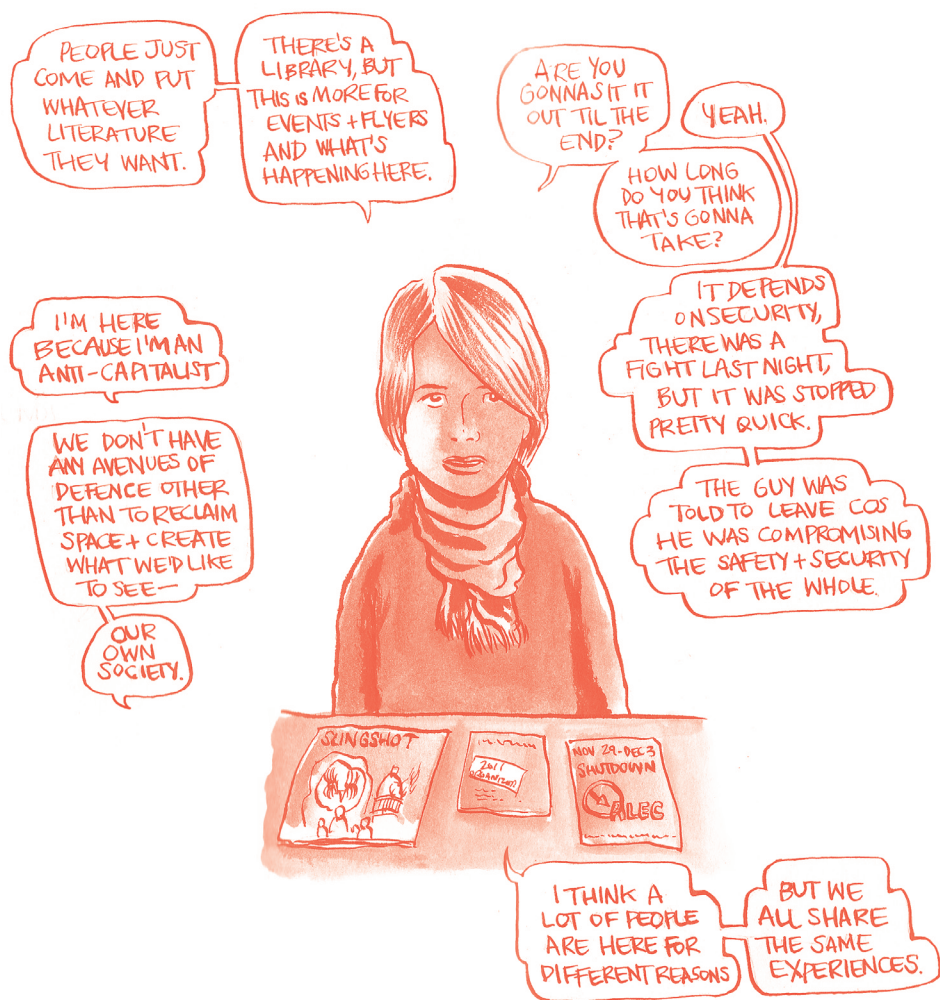
When the Georgia Legislature convened after the Civil War, it dutifully ratified the Thirteenth Amendment, as it was required to do to reenter the Union. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, except as punishment for crime.

With the Amendment ratified, the all-white Georgia Legislature passed the Black Codes, effectively reinstating slavery in Georgia. The Codes required former slaves to enter into labor contracts, with wages to be paid by the master totaling—after deductions for food, shelter and penalties for days not worked—two cents an hour. That's how Georgia's antebellum 1 percent had rolled before the war, and that's how they wanted to roll after it. The only industry had been cotton, so the Black Codes were written to keep freedmen working the same fields they had worked as slaves.

Those who resisted this reenslavement were confronted by a new vagrancy law; the enforcement of the Black Codes that made it illegal to "wander or stroll about in idleness" without a labor contract. Joseph Brown was arrested on Decatur Street in 1868, one of hundreds. Rather than picking cotton under a labor contract, he was in Atlanta without work. The charge: vagrancy.

Mr. Brown and other freedmen who were sentenced as vagrants were not sent to prison. Georgia's prison had been burned during the war, and there was no money to rebuild. Rather, they were

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issue that the "Safe Place" committee wanted to address, and I've seen signs for "access for all," demanding people keep ramps clear.

Still, seven days into the protest and there is no longer any room for tents on the plaza's large lawn. Tents are squeezed together so tightly that in many areas there is no room to move in between them, for me in my wheelchair or for someone who walks. There is more access to the community tents. There is a free school, an art station, a Sukkot tent, a medical tent, a children's area, a people of color tent, and a quite remarkable food station, where huge batches of soups and beans are made, and tea, coffee, and healthy snacks seem to be abundant. The various projects the camp is working on include installing solar panels, and reclaiming parts of the park as a community garden.

One of the most amazing aspects of being at Oscar Grant Plaza is witnessing how *moved* people are. People who may never have said a word to each other a week ago are now neighbors. The General Assembly meetings, which happen every evening, are often very beautiful. Of course people bicker, or get bored, or are sometimes disrespectful, but much of the time the meetings are thoughtful and patient.

The assembly talked very vulnerably about issues ranging from how to deal with sexism and violence at the campsite, to what role alcohol and partying should play in the encampment. We talked about the complexity of discouraging certain behaviors like drinking and partying, while also trying to respect people's individual freedoms. There was a strong sense of support, for watching out for each other, and of not wanting to give the police or the city any reason to try to kick us out. The Security Committee, which enlists volunteers to take shifts watching out for the campers throughout the night, encouraged more people to sign up.

Negotiating what different people want for the atmosphere of the camp is undoubtedly a challenge. Some of the protesters seem adamant that there can't be a revolution without a party, while others repeated numerous times that although they weren't strangers to partying themselves, "this camp is not Burning Man!"

Participating in this movement is intimidating in many ways, especially for people who are shy, or those who feel that there is no one "like them" at the protests. I'm certainly intimidated by camping with strangers, by being one of the only visibly disabled people present, and by the lack of access and simple comforts. However, I want to be out there, because I realize this sort of opportunity to come together doesn't happen every day. But also, I want to be there because I am hella proud of Oakland for creating this sort of encampment - an encampment that often fails in its desire to be a safe and accessible place for all people, but that is nonetheless trying.

leased out to plantation owners, railroad companies and coal mines. Georgia's first lease-off in 1868 was to a railroad company: \$2,500 bought 100 black men, arrested for vagrancy or loitering and forced to work not as slaves but as convicts.

This was the start of the modern criminal justice system. It was started, you might say, right here where Occupy Atlanta will be sleeping tonight, in Woodruff Park, by the post-Civil War plantation owners intent on keeping the work of black men and women cheap and available.

#### Occupied Atlanta, 1906

In 1906, Decatur Street, where Mr. Brown had been arrested 38 years earlier, was now lined with saloons, hotels, a buggy repair shop and the post office.

In Spring of that year, the Chief of Police in Atlanta launched a campaign to rid the city of black men. He committed a full squad of officers to "arrest all loafers" and close down the "Negro dives" that lined Decatur Street in downtown Atlanta. The chief told City Council that in order to arrest and prosecute all the vagrants, he would need 50 additional policemen.

Pressure to "arrest and lock up all the negroes who were idling about the city" intensified through the summer and into the fall. By the third week in September, coverage about the police campaign against "vagrants" and "negro dives" merged into sensational stories about white women around the city fending off sexual attacks by black men. Four such allegations turned into front page headlines in that week in September. On Saturday night, thousands of white men gathered in Five Points, sent there by the newspapers exhorting "good white men" to band together and take action to protect their women from "black beasts" and "animals."

By the time the sun set, over 5,000 white men were milling around Five Points. They were stomping their feet on the ground where Occupy Atlanta's general assemblies sit. Their numbers doubled over the next two hours, men armed with rifles, pistols, long knives and clubs. They were ready to kill.

And kill they did. Groups of 20, 30, 100 burst forward in a sprinting chase whenever a black man or boy appeared. A footrace up Peachtree Street, another down Decatur Street, another across a bridge flying over the railroad tracks. Three bodies were dumped in a pile at the foot of the statue of Henry Grady on Marietta Street. A black man was strung up on a lamppost along Peachtree. The white mobs raged through the night, quieting in the early morning.

Over three days, 25 black Atlantans were killed, maybe more. Another 50 or more had injuries serious enough to brave the streets to get to Grady Hospital. There is neither memorial nor mention of the dead among the commemorations in Woodruff Park.

#### Occupied Atlanta, 1960

Half a century later, the streets here around Woodruff Park had been scrubbed clean of any reminder of the race riot. Where the saloons had been were now office buildings—some modern steel frame, some red brick.

On Feb. 1, 1960, four black students in Greensboro, N.C., sat down at a Woolworth lunch counter and waited to be served. The police came, but could not arrest the students because they were not breaking any law. The next day, the students returned and again sat quietly at the Woolworth lunch counter. The media picked up the story, and the sit-ins spread. On Feb. 13, 500 students in Nashville sat-in at lunch counters across the city.

The Georgia Legislature responded with astonishing speed, passing a new trespassing law four days later—should the sit-ins spread to Atlanta, they wanted a law that would let the police

make arrests. A small law would do. Cast in the same mold as the early-century vagrancy laws, the new trespass law made it a crime to remain on the premises after being asked to leave.

In October, Atlanta students staged mass demonstrations and sit-ins at the Rich's Department Store in downtown Five Points and other counters across the city. Two blocks south of Woodruff Park, where Occupiers will sleep tonight, black students trained in nonviolent direct action took an elevator up to Rich's 6th floor Magnolia Room, or down to the Cockrel Grill in the basement, then sat down and waited to be served.

#### Occupied Atlanta, 1996

Atlanta changed. Rich's downtown became Macy's. A slain King made a final journey through the streets of Atlanta in a wooden farm wagon drawn by two mules, before being laid to rest in South View Cemetery. The students who had been arrested for trespassing became fathers, nurses, elected officials.

Then in 1996, the Olympics came to Atlanta. The city built a new jail in record time; it was the first facility completed for the Games. The city also closed down Woodruff Park and renovated it. The city took its time—it was their best chance to move out the homeless men and women who slept in the park—and when the park was reopened, it had been landscaped with a wide open slope to make it easier for police to keep it clear of the visibly poor.

Officials with the Atlanta Olympic Committee insisted the police were not used to clear poor black people out of downtown Atlanta for the Games. Yet, the visibly poor—nearly all black—disappeared from Woodruff Park for the duration of the Games. The county jail's population shot up from 2,200 to 4,500 before and during the Olympics. Officials insisted: just a coincidence.

Should the Atlanta Police decide to evict Occupy Atlanta from Woodruff Park, they will likely use one of the ordinances banning overnight sleeping or camping on public space, passed before and immediately after the 1996 Olympics.

#### Occupied Atlanta, 2011

Five days before the execution of Troy Davis, thousands of Atlantans gathered at Woodruff Park to march to Ebenezer Baptist Church for a part-vigil, part-protest that recalled the civil rights movement's most raucous mass meetings. The protest was majority—an overwhelming majority, if you include those already seated in Ebenezer Church—African American. The State of Georgia was not moved, and killed Troy Davis by lethal injection. Occupy Atlanta is majority—at times an overwhelming majority—white. It is trying to figure out how to do right by race.

But being anti-racist in this place—that is, in Woodruff Park, in Atlanta, in Georgia, in the South—is not mainly about getting more people of color to pitch a tent and sleep out there. Truth be told, I'm kind of OK with having mostly white people sleeping out there, because when the junta that runs downtown Atlanta decides it has had enough and people get carted off to jail, there's no need to have more black or brown people in the Atlanta City Detention Center.

Being anti-racist is: if you are going to set up camp and take Five Points as your center point, acknowledging that the corporate forces at play around there are totally about race. This is true currently, and it is true historically—no surprise. When Occupy Wall Street declared, "We come to you at a time when corporations, which place profit over people, self-interest over justice, and oppression over equality, run our governments," that was old news here, friends. The plantation owners have always run Georgia's government.

But they have not always run the street. In 1960, the students won. Was it because they were one sit-in among dozens of sit-ins happening around the country, much like Occupy Atlanta is one of dozens? Was it because they had both strong process and direct action? Was it because they confronted the criminal justice system head on, demanding to be arrested and refusing to post bail? Maybe, maybe, maybe.

Now that John Lewis has been invited back, maybe he will sit down and give some insight. He wasn't just a good soldier in the Movement. He was, in my unbiased-notwithstanding-lifelong-crush-on-John-Lewis opinion, the catalyst that turned a series of actions into this country's greatest freedom movement.

So I am suggesting that, in addition to questions of logistics and process during Occupy Atlanta's committee meetings and larger assemblies, the questions of why and how race and racism figure into this fight are, I think, worth trying to think through and understand together. Because this is Georgia, after all. And because what happens in Woodruff Park Troy Davis Park in 2011 is being written now.

NIKIL SAVAL

### Occupy Philadelphia

The first planning meeting of Occupy Philadelphia was to be held at the Wooden Shoe Bookstore, an anarchist collective; the day of the meeting, Thursday September 29, 200 people showed up, so it was moved to the Arch Street United Methodist Church near City Hall. The church holds a capacity of 900 people. Last night, at the first General Assembly, there were at least a thousand. The pews were packed, and though the night was cold, the church grew hot, stifling. People lined the walls, sat in the aisles, leaned over the balconies, crowded the doorways. They held signs: "IF CORPORATIONS ARE PEOPLE, THEN SHOW ME THEIR BIRTH CERTIFICATE!" "MR PRESIDENT: GROW A PAIR." We were dazed, excited, frightened by the sheer mass of our own presence. At the first meeting, where a decidedly more somnolent atmosphere prevailed, legal details of various kinds of occupation were hashed out with the help of free speech lawyers. Occupying federal land (Independence Mall, for example) can have tremendous symbolic power but brings with it the potential cost of being thrown into county jails in the event of arrest—and, worse, the possibility of a federal trial overseen by Republican-stocked juries, who have been notoriously unforgiving to protesters. It was left to last night's perfervid General Assembly to decide by straw poll which, of four state-owned locations, was the best. Locations were to be judged in terms of 1) suitability for camping and access to bathroom facilities; 2) symbolism; 3) visibility; 4) the danger of displacing the homeless; and 5) whether there was history of past actions at the location. We ruled out one immediately—Ben Franklin Parkway/Logan Square, near the art museum, which is more a place for biking, running, and barbecuing than holding the political class and the entire financial system accountable for the massive inequities of an unjust society. It came down to Rittenhouse Square, a lovely park surrounded by some of the richest real estate in the country; LOVE Park, a small square that was caddy corner from City Hall; and City Hall itself. We broke into groupuscules and debated for ten minutes. "Clarifying questions" and "concerns" were solicited from the crowd. "There is a tight-knit community group that controls Rittenhouse Square," someone cautioned; she meant that they could have the police there to root

out protesters in no time. "That tight-knit community is the one percent!" someone cried in response; there was an exultation of cheers, along with that shimmer of raised hands and twinkling fingers that has become the protests' accepted sign for approval. "Do these people know how Rittenhouse Square residents vote?" a hoary, bearded man behind me grumbled. "They're like the most progressive voting bloc in the city!" Against the consensus model of the anarchist meeting, someone offered a dissensus: "I don't think consensus is a democratic model." "Everyone's here, what are we waiting for? Why don't we go occupy it now?" someone finally shouted, in frustration. "I appreciate the enthusiasm," the moderator replied, "but that is not a clarifying question." Others were worried about camping facilities, the problem of sleeping on concrete ("They're on concrete in Zuccotti Park!"), access to bathrooms. "People, this is an occupation," a woman sternly reminded, "it doesn't matter where we are: It-is-going-to suck!" One of the last concerns was the most vital, the one that has haunted and goaded the protests since the very beginning. "Why are we starting with direct action? I'm thinking of 'Letter From a Birmingham Jail,' where Dr. King says that we should start with what we want, then when they don't give it to us..." His voice was lost in the ensuing murmur. It was too difficult, too thorny a question for people who were already in motion, who wanted too much, who knew too much to bear one more day of what they knew. When the decision was made, with a forest of stiff arms and high hands, to occupy City Hall, the hands began to twinkle, to drop, to break into applause, under a high wail of cheers and ululations. Dates were debated, but there was no question that the soonest one—tomorrow, October 6th—at the earliest proposed time—9 AM—would be chosen. A member from the Industrial Workers of the World (the Wobblies!) led us in a singing of "Solidarity Forever." The last line, "for the union keeps us strong," reminded me of the days I had spent in cold, cold San Francisco volunteering for the hotel workers' union: day after day in the endless fog, handing out flyers, shouting through a bull horn, circling a lobby with picket signs, waiting patiently for a police officer to zip-tie me for blocking a street, singing union songs on the city bus commandeered to lead us to jail. There were losses every day, grievous ones, which bore directly on the welfare of thousands of workers, but there was nonetheless a steady hum of festivity to every day of work, which kept us going. Yesterday night, I felt far from the grim headlines that greeted me alone the next morning about the eurozone and the endless crisis of unemployment, because organizing, in however limited a fashion, does that to you: it keeps you, as Joe Hill might have said, from mourning.

We ended early, an unheard of phenomenon for a left wing meeting. I walked out expecting chill, but the air had warmed, or maybe I was warmer. There was City Hall: the very thing we would occupy, whose purpose we might at last bring to fruition. "Returning home, riding down Market street in an open summer car," wrote Walt Whitman in Specimen Days,

something detain'd us between Fifteenth and Broad, and I got out to view better the new, three-fifths-built marble edifice, the City Hall, of magnificent proportions—a majestic and lovely show there in the moonlight—flooded all over, façades, myriad silver-white lines and carv'd heads and mouldings with the soft dazzle—silent, weird, beautiful—well, I know that never when finish'd will that magnificent pile impress one as it impress'd me those fifteen minutes.

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Adriana Camarena

## Occupy San Francisco

What with the city's history of radical and progressive activism, and armies of prêt-a-porter-protesters for the cause of the day, you'd have thought that Occupy San Francisco was going to revolutionize the revolution. But, shockingly, in its first days it was a teeter-tottering training ground for the uninitiated activist. Meanwhile, across the Bay, Occupy Oakland was a lean mean utopian dream-making machine. Seasoned anarchists, communists, and other young activists descended upon Frank Ogawa Plaza in front of Oakland's City Hall like a disaster relief operation that was following pre-established communications, safety, health, and organization protocols.

The call for Occupy San Francisco is said to have been put out by a posse of twenty-year-olds who had been "occupying" the Upper Haight. They were "traveling kids," as they're called, the kind who arrive every season to live in the streets of the Haight, Panhandle, or upper Golden Gate Park. Last year, the city began a campaign against them because they were allegedly harassing residents and tourists for cash on the street. Despite city-wide protests, a law came into effect that actually prohibited *sitting* on the street.

A young androgynous-looking woman named Charm—with ten piercings in her face—introduced herself to me as a traveling kid. "I came to San Francisco to attend the Hardly Strictly Bluegrass Festival with my road dog, Tucker. But, when the occupation was called, I decided to stay." Charm was realistic. "I know I don't have a lot of opportunities. I've been working since I was fifteen. I live from what people share or I make money taking up odd jobs in the cities I visit."

The San Francisco occupation was established on a sidewalk, in front of the Federal Reserve Building, and right outside an exit of the BART. On one side the camp faced the street; on the other side it faced a line of barricades and police. Young hippies would sit on columns facing traffic with their signs, without shoes, shirt and sometimes without pants. When rain came, the occupiers broke out the tarps, making the occupation most resemble an underpass homeless encampment. On rainy days, they remained ensconced under the covers until mid-day. It was a scraggly-waggly camp. There was no way a middle-aged mortgage-bearing 99%-er would take up with this crowd.

The occupiers struggled through their General Assembly, mimicking the People's Mic they saw used in New York, even though everyone could hear everyone, given the size of the group. They twinkled their hands in agreement, and made gun fingers to indicate a clarification, but still showed little success in moving decisions forward by a consensus process.

Things started to change when several direct action organizers—in particular Starhawk, a longtime activist skilled in teaching facilitation processes, and David Solnit, veteran of the WTO protests in Seattle—offered their help. They facilitated meetings, but, most importantly, they offered training to new organizers on how to facilitate their own meetings. It was their occupation, after all.

After a few days, the camp had rules prohibiting alcohol, drugs, and smoking; and commitments from all to keep the place clean. A sign read, "The World Is Watching You. Represent the Movement By Keeping Your Space and Common Areas Clean." Different types of occupiers and visitors started showing up. A kitchen and a library sprung up, facing passers-by. Elsewhere in the city, seasoned activists shut down the Wells Fargo main offices downtown with the raucous People's Liberation Band in tote. On October 15, five thousand people flooded the streets of San Francisco with their homemade signs in support of the Occupy Wall Street movement, and against every imaginable grievance. The General Assembly decided to move the occupation to nearby Justin Herman Plaza, for more room.

Nevertheless, Occupy San Francisco remains a fledgling movement. Every night, or so it seems, the police and DPW crews break down the tents. In Oakland, if a police officer enters the camp, the occupiers activate a communication protocol to surround the officer and escort him out.

Activists and community organizers in San Francisco did not start the San Francisco Occupation, and therefore they weren't involved in the early structure of the movement. Instead they are coming unexpectedly late into a movement substantially composed of enthusiastic young adults who are just learning the gestures and technologies of horizontal movements. While Occupy San

Francisco passes through growing pains, busy city activists find themselves in an unusual predicament of both wanting to be supportive of Occupy SF, but feeling more comfortable doing so in affinity with it, outside the actual space of the occupation.

My friend Antonio Roman-Alcala, who has been instrumental in running the Alemany Farm in San Francisco, put out a call: "Come Occupy My Garage." The invitation was to gather and discuss new ways of supporting the occupation while carrying out actions outside the occupation. Attendees self-organized into groups interested in Publications, Events, Organizations, and Posters/Art.

It is now my sense that more people will join Occupy San Francisco by supporting the principles of the General Assembly through de-centralized actions throughout the city. The hope is that more people will be drawn to the Occupation. There was talk of having art events and performances in front of City Hall. Another group was going to make flyers and essays to distribute to people seeking information. I discussed with the poster group about making signs in Spanish that would allow me to be addressed or strike-up conversations with my fellow immigrant neighbors.

On my walk home from Antonio's, I asked a Latino homie hanging out on a trick bike at a corner, whether he knew what the 99% movement mentioned on the news was all about. He graciously said, "I don't know, but they might be able to inform you inside the store." I thought that was a great idea, and will return soon to ask whether we are 99%-ers.

I attended a dinner the next evening. We discussed how participating in effective consensus processes expands people's imagination of a world in which they directly determine the distribution and management of resources at a local level for the well being of a collective. Occupy Oakland makes clear that there is enough for everyone. Occupy San Francisco is getting there. Inspired by what she was seeing, a friend Ruby Wisefool, who manages the Urban Homesteading Institute in Oakland, asked: How long before one block in one neighborhood decides to become self-reliant, self-governed, self-sustaining? Can we extend the lessons of occupying a place together into our everyday lives?

Joanne McNeil

## Occupy the Internet

**A Tumblr of user-submitted handwritten signs with bleak personal testimonies first captured the internet's attention. Presented are the lives of real people, unmistakable hardships, ready to reblog and retweet. But implied—by the faces, the faces, the faces—is that to sympathize you must show up. This time a Facebook "like" is not enough.**

**There is something twisted and belittling about the momentary act of tapping on Tumblr's like button—a heart icon—when you are looking at the face of someone who has itemized his debt in magic marker for you to calculate. How much we have and what we owe is what we are typically raised never to discuss openly in polite company. These images of persons denuded of financial mystery request from the viewer something just as human; not a thoughtless mouse click. To properly commiserate with the enormity of this curated series of individual misfortunes, one must in person participate.**

**Around the globe, the "99 percent" sloganing rings effortlessly. This is a generation accustomed to encapsulating arguments into 140 character messages. It is also a generation experienced in negotiating private entities for public means. Zuccotti Park's tenuous standing as a privately owned public park seems an inevitable metaphor for the questions of free speech, assembly, and property rights posed by so many virtual spaces. Brookfield is like Facebook, Bloomberg like Zuckerberg: their threatened park closure is like the ever-present possibility that Facebook will suspend activist accounts and group pages used to plan rallies and activities, for vaguely specified reasons.**

**"We must occupy real and virtual spaces," Reuters' Anthony De Rosa tweeted, quoting an occupier at the second Washington Square park General Assembly. Without one there couldn't exist the other.**

**Every morning the seemingly impossible occurs—the occupied territory remains in the hands of occupiers. Without Facebook, social networking would disperse to dedicated alternatives from Piratepad to Eventbrite. But modularly redistributing Zuccotti Park would destroy its momentum. An**



encampment of less than 24 hours is not a home. Living in the territory is what sets its example for the rest of the world.

Occupiers play chess with chess pieces and read books made of paper. They partake in activities the internet is said to be dematerializing. Part of the utopic vision of Zuccotti Park as a microcosm is that real and virtual worlds may more peacefully coexist.

Occupy Wall Street's actual web presence (<http://occupywallst.org/>)—"unofficial de facto online resource"—is a lean website not much more advanced than what Indymedia provided a decade before it. But its simplicity offers replicability. In the first month, over a thousand cities have occupied, many with bare bones "Occupy" websites of their own.

A leaderless movement doesn't have to scrim on design elegance, as the evocative poster of dancer balancing on the Bowling Green Bull demonstrates. Occupy Wall Street is purposefully "bootstrapping," as a Silicon Valley marketer would put it. Perfect is the enemy of done. Elsewhere up-to-date minutes from GA assemblies are posted (<http://nycga.cc/>) to a basic blog template. There are comments for people to fact check that seem mostly populated with #OWS trolls ("...Buck up people get off your whiny ass and get a job. A job is a job is a job, no matter what you do...") Often slapdash, the transcripts are replete with typos, which isn't of chief concern as one would expect each meeting was recorded over a plethora of Android and iPhone app options. Further documentation of meetings might be pieced together with Twitter and Flickr fragments.

The occupation is a gesture against the isolating experience of the screen-mediated online world. A need to experience the world for one's self, to communicate with more than text. So many email threads and conversations over SMS go on, ceaselessly, over points that can be made instantly face-to-face. The "human mic" is not so tedious in comparison.

The "human mic," after all, is acting like a retweet—a filter of redundancy; when it works best, you don't hear things twice. This call-and-response is impossible to do while checking email at the same time.

How dizzying and science fictional the everyday absurdity of social media might have seemed in Seattle or A16. Back then, citizen journalists had to hurry back to an ethernet connection to upload images and file stories. Now, smart phones enable published testimony and imaging the very moment one bears witness.

Ten years ago, we interacted online based on protocols of face-to-face. Today we introduce ourselves to one another based on how we meet online—following interesting-looking strangers on Tumblr or Twitter. Maybe we've seen their faces already as tiny icons, friends of somebody else we know on the screen.

The state ban on face coverings enforced at demonstrations and occupations—the reason why you don't see caucusing of Guy Fawkes masks in New York—is the real space equivalent of Google Plus and Facebook strictly enforced terms of service forbidding pseudonyms. However mandated, the generational shift toward "authenticity" online, owning one's identity part and parcel, is the culture that created the "We are the 99 Percent" Tumblr. The most powerful images come from the unmasked and de-anonymized, who share their grief of unemployment, student loans, the inability to afford healthcare—and the frustration in their eyes.

That isn't to dismiss Anonymous'—and thus 4chan's—role in developing this movement. Zuccotti Park is an immersive experience. Its intricate LARP-like gameplay; the possibility to volunteer service to the first aid, sanitation, library, or media units regardless of experience; comes from the trickster spirit of decentralized web culture. Like the internet, Zuccotti Park offers the potential to assume any identity with knowledge and curiosity. Anyone can be anything in the occupied space—cooks, janitors, nurses, librarians, dreamers.

# THE POLICE

Jeremy Kessler

## The Police and the 99 Percent

After a week of light media coverage, slow-motion video of Deputy Police Inspector Captain Anthony Bologna macing four women trapped in a net cage brought Occupy Wall Street to the nation's attention. The next week, police arrested over 500 protesters on Brooklyn Bridge as news broke that J.P. Morgan Chase had recently donated an "unprecedented" \$4.6 million to the NYPD "to strengthen security in the Big Apple." Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly wrote to J.P. Morgan's Chairman, Jamie Dimon, expressing his "profound gratitude."

Such events have failed to surprise the residents of Zuccotti Park. Indeed, there are two things that any good American protester knows about the police: they're bought and they're brutal. It is not just those in the street who see a familiar narrative unfolding. In the pages of the

New York Times, Gina Bellafante warns that police overreaction will only fuel the "ideologically vague and strategically baffling effort" that is the Occupation. She points to violence at Columbia University in 1968 and Tompkins Square Park twenty years later to support her claim.

Despite these precedents, the Occupation should not be too eager about escalating police violence. The tedious transformation of substantive political protest into protest against police abuse of protesters can, at times, be ideologically appropriate and tactically useful. But unlike student, neighborhood, and even civil rights protests, whose participants generally present themselves as a conscientious minority oppressed by larger forces—particularly police power—the central claim of the Occupiers is that they are the "99 percent," the moral majority of the nation.

A quick look around Zuccotti Park will confirm that 99 percent of the nation is not in attendance. Nor would organizers—proponents of direct, rather than representative, democracy—wish to claim that they "represent" 99 percent of the country. The true, utopian endgame of the Occupiers is to become what they say they are. Such an ambitious goal calls for two components that more targeted protests

don't—longevity and diversity. The police who currently ring the park could provide both.

First, the threat of assault and especially arrest at the hands of police will continue to limit participation in the Occupation. As Yves Smith somewhat bluntly put it in the wake of eighty arrests near Union Square, "No one who is a wage slave (which is the overwhelming majority of the population) can afford to have an arrest record, even a misdemeanor, in this age of short job tenures and rising use of background checks." A police force sufficiently sympathetic with protesters, however, could engage in tacit under-enforcement of the urban space, making protest a more hospitable practice for the average employee and professional dissident alike. Encouraging individual officers to trade in subtle sabotage—as an alternative to calling for an incredibly unlikely police strike—would be a useful protest activity.

Second, the absence of the police themselves from the Occupation undermines the 99 percent claim that is central to the movement's populism. Here the problem of police power produces something of a vicious circle. To the extent that police power limits the protesters mainly

to the young and the nomadic, individual police will find few protesters with whom they can identify. Announcements of support for the Occupation by the large healthcare workers union, Local 1199 SEIU, and the Local 100 Transit Workers Union do suggest that more middle-class participation is on the way. Again, however, police behavior toward these newcomers will be an important influence on their long-term commitment to the movement.

In the end, police sympathy for the movement will only follow broadening of the social and economic base of the Occupation. As with other aspects of the protesters' strategy, means and ends remain essentially indistinguishable. In order to develop a strong relationship with police, the Occupation will have to develop strong relationships with a lot of other people. There is something boring and obvious in this sociological calculus. But it is the only hope of the Occupation.

Does the Occupation understand this? Prior to the Occupation, the General Assembly agreed that no formal liaison with the police would be established.



More recently, at a security meeting, some participants suggested that victims of theft or assault in Zuccotti Park should *not* be discouraged from reporting such crime to the authorities. In response, a handsome, dark-haired man in his mid-twenties stated unequivocally: “I hate the police.” He went on to convince his colleagues that “peacekeeping” should be an entirely internal affair—if for no other reason than that recourse to the police would provide fodder for those seeking to shut down the park. Now plans are being made to assemble a group of volunteer peacekeepers along the lines of the sanitation, medical, and “comfort” teams who work round the clock.

It is important to understand the immediate sources of such strong anti-police sentiment. The first morning of the protest, at seemingly random intervals, police would break the perimeter of the square and grab one or more protesters, taking them to the ground and dragging them away. Nobody knew who was going to be seized next. That night, police in riot gear stood two rows deep on Broadway, with two more lines of officers at the ready on the north and south sides of the park, creating a funnel toward Trinity Place. Finally, the police backed down—the

dispersal order never came. But it almost certainly will come one day, and until then, real brutality always threatens the next march, as the protesters—and police’s—numbers swell.

However cogent their fear and distrust, the Occupiers must appeal to the police. Many of them realize this. At a recent discussion, some participants sought to change the General Assembly’s policy against establishing formal police relations. Alice, a daily visitor to the park, proposed having a group of protesters who, at least during marches, continually communicate with the police, the better to understand what actions they expect and what they’re comfortable with. Dallas reported that when he first arrived at the park, he walked around the outer-ring of police with a sign stating, “We are you,” and thanked each officer for being there. “I actually vibrated, the energy was good, I got goose bumps,” he said. Many signs seek solidarity with the police, and occupiers frequently break ranks to joke with officers late into the evening.

A few nights ago, as a fall wind shook the thin trees, a policeman stood chatting with three teenaged boys and their dogs. The boys were clearly drifters, dirty and ragged. The middle-aged officer had a glint

in his eye and a smile peeking out from under his mustache as the boys told him that they planned to stay in the park for the long haul. In a strange mix of sportsman’s challenge and paternal concern, he asked, “What happens if you get sick?”

The virtue of the Occupation is its patience. Happily, it does not understand itself to be some decisive *choice*, some semidivine intervention into the workaday world of American politics. The protesters’ much-maligned taste for process is to their advantage: it indicates not a naïve obsession with good conscience but an appreciation for the slow conversion of individuals to the movement through repeated moments of discovery and respect. For the police to become part of the 99 percent, which they—presumably—are, a significant radicalization of the social and political atmosphere will already have had to occur. The Occupation understands itself to be the vehicle of this radicalization.

Jasper Bernes,  
Joshua Clover,  
Annie McClanahan,

## PERCENTAGES, POLITICS, AND THE POLICE

[This response to Jeremy Kessler was published on the website of the *Los Angeles Review of Books* on October 15, 2011.]

The generally inclusive and indefinite nature of the politics behind the Occupy movement has been both its

**And so it goes down the scroll, and for pages and pages: returning veterans without jobs and with variously crippling disabilities, a would-be member of the professional class, “I have three masters degrees, no job, and over 80,000 in student debt,” a woman who says she and her husband are afraid to have children because “they will be part of the 99%,” another woman who writes her own epitaph in the last line of her testimony, “First in my family to go to college. Built a wonderful international career in nonprofits. Now I’m unable to get a cashier job at the zoo because chronic depression, unemployment, and lack of access to medical care ruined my credit score. I played by the rules.” There are teachers, kids afraid to go to college, the children of immigrants who realize they will have worse lives than their parents, grandparents worried about their grandchildren and their own retirements. In most of the photographs, faces are either partially hidden or downcast, in attitudes of shame, a few, mostly the youngest, look out defiantly. It cannot go on. It goes on.**

The website, an open blog, or tumblr, called “We are the 99%,” is one of the few and more remarkable documents to emerge from the Occupy Wall Street movement. The diversity of the stories and faces on display provides a pretty definitive rebuttal to anyone still naïve or malicious enough to claim that the movement is composed exclusively of hippies, anarchists, and other phantasms of the 1960s New Left conjured by CNN, National Review Online, and the editors of the *New Republic*. The tumblr provides a portrait in aggregate of the emerging majority of Americans: indebted, often over-educated for the few jobs and salaries available to them, stripped of dignity, tormented by anxieties over how to care for themselves and their families, laid off from jobs, non-unionized, clinging precariously to an idea of middle-classness that seems more and more to be a chimera of the past. Never mind democracy, this is what a “lost decade” looks like. Behold the human, subjective correlatives of what Paul Krugman, Joseph Stiglitz, and other honorable economists were warning about when they described the effects of life in a chronic liquidity trap, when businesses won’t invest in labor and the government fails to stimulate the economy.

Politically and culturally, however, “We are the 99%” offers a more ambiguous series of messages. The nation and society that can produce this kind of document is undoubtedly in the throes of a nasty transformation. A historically minded reader will be reminded of the few testimonies by English independent hand-loom weavers at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, unearthed by E. P. Thompson in his *Making of the English Working Class*. Driven off the land into wage and debt slavery to large textile manufacturers in Manchester and elsewhere, after the advent of the power loom, the weavers, a mostly literate group, told their stories in letters to their families and magistrates, or recorded them in popular ballads. It was a time when, as Wordsworth put it in a poem about the fate of one such weaving family, “many rich sunk down as in a dream among the poor,/and of the poor did many cease to be,/and their place knew them not.” For all the pathos of the plight of the weavers, they are now mostly remembered as a footnote to the larger movements of modernity and industrialization of which they were victims. The creation of an archive or memorial, even in real time, does not, by itself, constitute resistance, and it might be the case that the 99 percenters recorded on the

# THE 99 PERCENT

MARCO ROTH

Letters of Resignation from the American Dream

A web page, white and red letters against a black background, a scrollable gallery of faces most of them almost entirely hidden by hand-written notes in a variety of colors and formats. One, the quarter face of a bald, bearded white man, holding a yellow legal pad, where he’s written in block print capitals, “I work 3 jobs, none which provide health insurance. My son is on Medicaid. We are on W.I.C. We’re one paycheck from disaster. I am the 99%.” Another, showing only a young woman’s fingers gripping her note,

I graduated college a year ago and have a job as a journalist. I am lucky. Every time we have a staff meeting someone is laid off. My entire office is struggling; professionals making less than 30K a year. I am scared everyday that I will lose my job and be stuck with 50K in student loans that won’t be paid off until I am 40. After loan payments and car insurance I am left with only money for gas. I am extremely lucky, it could be worse, at least I can live with my parents for a while. I am the 99 percent.

virtue and vice. Or, to put it in less moralistic terms, the ideological flexibility of the occupations—in New York, and beyond—has generated extraordinary opportunities while at the same time presenting real limits to a serious challenge of capital's domination.

A mutation of both the university occupations of 2009 (where the slogan "Occupy Everything" was brought to life) and the "movement of the squares" in Egypt, Spain, and Greece, these American occupations have managed to draw forth a variegated crowd of generally anti-capitalist character in city after city: Anarchists and socialists, disenchanting liberals and trade unionists, teachers and teenagers, street kids and college kids, the entire motley crew growing rather than fading away, moving from novelty song to popular genre with a breadth and rapidity that would have commanded utter disbelief in August. And it is apparent that the refusal to decide in advance on the exact political content of this movement—and instead suggesting

that such a content will emerge through the process of struggle—is very much part of what has allowed for this sequence's unfolding and brought so many people out into the plazas of our cities. The notion of the 99 percent is part of this inclusiveness, but it's also an emblem of the real limits here.

Central among these limits is the incoherent stance often taken toward the police by the occupiers, or, more specifically, the organizers of the occupations. It can only be of the greatest significance that this issue has emerged as the central matter of debate; it secures the suspicion that the question is at the center of the occupation movement's politics, and its fate.

But this hypersignificance remains opaque. Again and again, these occupations have featured scenes in which protesters beaten and pepper-sprayed by the police have insisted that their oppressors are also, in their way, part of the 99 percent. Occasionally, in New York, there is a more complicated fantasy in which

the only truly oppressive cops are the supervisors—"whiteshirts," after the white (rather than blue) shirts they wear, but also because obliquely referencing class status—whereas the blue-collar cops are only reluctantly doing their jobs.

At the same time, there has been more and more criticism of collaborationist policies toward the police, and an increasingly acrimonious debate within the movement, initiated in many cases by its anarchist and anti-statist wing. Occupy Oakland, for instance, has refused to cooperate with the Oakland Police and its General Assemblies feature long lines of people who speak eloquently and bluntly about police violence in the city. So there is a debate within the movement, one that the brutal police repression of Occupy Boston, happening just as Occupy Oakland was getting under way, has in some regard brought to a head.

In an ironic turn, on the same day as the repression of Occupy Boston, *n+1* published Jeremy Kessler's "The Police and the 99 Percent," a virtual compendium of the fallacies, apologetics, wishful thinking, and

historical misprisions assembled to defend the strategy of police compliance. Alas—and curiously enough for a journal with a brief but consistent record of critique—the article sides decisively with compliance and complicity. In doing so, it misunderstands the character of the occupations; the recent history of the movement of the squares; the role and history of the police in relation to antistate and anticapitalist movements; the position of non-violence; and accepts exactly what is most problematic and disabling about the formulation of the "99 Percent."

Kessler approaches the issue of the police not from a moralistic position—he does not insist, for instance, that we must approach the police with loving kindness, lest we produce bad vibes or bad karma—but from a strategic one. He thinks that confrontations with police dissuade a putative "middle-class," including union labor, from joining the occupation. The only possible recourse is to live up to the Occupy movement's promise of including the superplurality of the "99 Percent." The movement must, therefore, establish links with

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**tumblr will be viewed by future historians as the necessary fallen of the age of post-industrialization, the great adjustment, or whatever name, probably in Chinese or Brazilian Portuguese, they give our present moment of economic and social realignment.**

**At the same time, there is a certain limited but important power behind all these displays of futility: By writing "I am the 99%" or in some cases "we are the 99%" at the end their litanies, the individuals who have chosen to post their post-industrial miseries on the web, are doing something that Americans of recent generations have been notionally averse to doing. They are actually creating class-consciousness, for themselves and those around them. It's not just a gesture, but a speech act in the same way, for instance, as saying that you accept Jesus Christ as your savior is enough to make you a Christian among certain born-again churches. When an individual chooses to follow the instructions of [wearethe99percent.tumblr.com](http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com)—**

Let us know who you are. Take a picture of yourself holding a sign that describes your situation—for example, "I am a student with \$25,000 in debt," or "I needed surgery and my first thought wasn't if I was going to be okay, it was how I'd afford it." Below that, write "I am the 99 percent."

**—he or she writes a letter of resignation from the American Dream and pledges allegiance to the 99% movement, the goals of which remain as yet undefined even as it builds strength with every person who, as the tumblr puts it, "gets known."**

The voluntary humility of these gestures is subtly reinforced by an association, one that will immediately spring to the mind of anyone who's lived in a major American city, between these handwritten accounts of personal troubles and the signs often carried by the homeless: "HIV Positive, No Insurance, Please Help," "Homeless Vietnam Vet," "Published Poet: New York Times, Amsterdam News, etc. Now sells his poems directly to you!" Intended or accidental element of style, this identification of the Occupy Movement and the urban homeless and panhandlers emerges as one of the most uncanny and powerfully disturbing aspects of the current protests. Just as the early communists heralded the proletariat as the repository of potential revolutionary consciousness, so OWS holds up the homeless as the privileged figure of contemporary American post-capitalist life. This elevation of homelessness by reducing everyone outside the 1% of über-capitalists to their ranks occurs at more than the level of signage. The reclamation of the semi-public sphere being carried out in Zuccotti Park and elsewhere in America is, it turns out, of immediate practical benefit to the permanently

**urban homeless who may shortly be able to begin claiming the political dignity of occupation for themselves, not to mention access to the unofficial support network of soup kitchens, medical tents, libraries, and legal advice set up by the Occupiers.**

On the other hand, as with all solidarity politics, mostly practiced in Europe, "We are all German Jews," "We are all Illegal Immigrants!," and, briefly, after 9-11, "We are all Americans," "We Are all Homeless" clashes against certain existing realities, as when an actual homeless man interrupted a meeting of the Occupy Philadelphia education committee to ask for money. The consternation on the faces of the Occupiers was visible, and when the man lay down just outside the circle, on the concrete, the group's coordinator, a young woman who flashed with the magnetizing beauty that seems to attach to so many who assumed leading roles in OWS, immediately sat down next to him, persuading him to move, fruitlessly, while the meeting dissolved into chaos. At that moment, however, she was no longer acting in ruthless solidarity ("we're out here with you, brother," as one guy called out, his hands never moving from his pockets), but in more old-fashioned sympathy. She could afford to take time off from the revolution, she thought, because whatever percentage she was, she had resources that the homeless guy did not have. These habits do not get unlearned overnight or even over several nights, and it might not turn out very well if we did thoroughly unlearn them.

As a slogan, it's hard to get less individualistic than "I am the 99%." Yet the personal narratives of American suffering have a hard time staying out of people's testimonies: I've read about child abuse and marital breakups. I've performed amateur graphology to see if the guy who says he has 3 doctorates might be exaggerating. At a certain point, I simply ran aground against the conundrum encapsulated by the "banks got bailed out, we got sold out," chant. Is OWS a movement calling for the people to be bailed out, too, or a movement of noble anger against the corporate welfare state we've been living in? Or is it, in fact, an actual liberation movement, aimed largely at reclaiming the freedom of the streets for popular assembly, against tourism and a managed public sphere? Is this, in fact, the largest homeless rights movement on the planet?

Having looked at We are the 99% for pages and pages, I was suddenly overcome with an odd desire to see those iconic Walker Evans photographs

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the police by appearing more like the police themselves, in cultural terms. It should establish itself as, well, kind of normal-looking and non-threatening. This might encourage the police toward a quiet insubordination once the call to crack down on Liberty Plaza eventually comes.

The first thing to say about this is that what Kessler proposes has already been contradicted by the very situation he describes. The occupation in Zuccotti Park began as a relatively small encampment, and the initial police response was, as Kessler himself observes, “brutal.” Videos quickly surfaced of police grabbing, tossing, macing, batoning, barricading, and arresting protestors without provocation; one video showed an officer telling another that he hoped “his nightstick would get a workout tonight.” It was precisely the spread of these videos that drew the crowds, that made it impossible for the media to continue to ignore the protests; it was precisely the unmistakable images of a violent state apparatus mobilized to protect financial interests that revealed the nature of the present moment. The October non-surprise that JPMorgan Chase had previously donated \$4.6 million to the NYC Police Foundation (the largest gift in the foundation’s history) gave this relationship between the police and the financiers a headline, but the earlier images of police brutality at Occupy Wall Street had already presented more powerfully the same material fact, and it was these images that began to draw more protestors to

Zuccotti Park. We can dispense with the notion that the specter of police violence is the real limit to participation by some phantom “American middle class.” But we cannot dispense with the notion that police are violent and threatening, and that they will be—have already been—levied to break the occupations.

It is hard to imagine anyone denying that it would be a good thing if the police were to take the side of the occupations. This is a far cry, however, from the belief that such a thing could reasonably happen. We must distinguish between analysis—an analysis of the concrete situation and accompanying historical record—and wish fulfillment fantasy. The latter tends, after all, to lead toward quite disastrous strategic and tactical decisions. In Tahrir Square—a place and idea toward which the Occupy movement swears fidelity—there was, despite some folks’ hysterical amnesia on this score, no commitment to non-violence, no gesture of complicity with the police, and no hesitation in resisting the government’s armed thugs. The Egyptians understood with clarity who their antagonists were, what their relationship to them was, and what would be needed to prevent the movement from being crushed by the folks with the guns and clubs.

The argument that “the cops will eventually come to sweep us away” may seem to open onto the conclusion “thus the cops must be befriended”—but only if one somehow suppresses the very reasons that

**of the Depression era South in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Those photos, so austere, so pure, are seared into the cultural memory of a certain American generation: the cool-eyed stare of the young woman, framed against the clapboard side of a house, her mouth in a thin, crooked almost-smile that doesn’t quite prevent us from noticing the cheeks sunken from malnourishment and early loss of teeth, the barefoot tow-headed children on their rickety porches, amid the cast down farm tools, a pair of worn and dusty boots. Part of a WPA project that aimed to call attention to the depth of rural American poverty, Evans’s photographs perversely ended up memorializing and ennobling the hardness of the lives that the government he worked for wanted to ameliorate. Through the very stoicism that came out on camera and in James Agee’s accompanying text, his subjects came to signify the virtuous poor who deserved “a hand up, not a handout,” although they mostly got food stamps. Those images were made to convince a public of outsiders, and that is the very thing that makes the suffering they display so easy on the eye, all these generations later. I wanted some old time stoicism that I could project my emotions on, like the good liberal I stubbornly remain, even though I know that, in politics, no silence goes unpunished. What I wanted from OWS, too, as an outsider, was greater dignity, even while knowing that they wouldn’t be so indignant if America hadn’t lost all its own long ago. “We Are the 99%” is more an internal document of the movement than an external one. It doesn’t want your sympathy, although many of the stories are written in a language designed to evoke sympathy. It’s an invitation to identify, to join the party and accept the consequences of acknowledging that, in fact, we are the 99 percent.**

the cops will come in the first place, and the long history of the police in relation to popular militancy. Cairo is one such example; others multiply throughout history. On the other side of the ledger: few entries indeed. It is true that armies and navies have been known to take the side of the people in revolutionary moments, but they are in the business of taking and holding territory, a portable trade. Police are charged with disciplining populations. Were they to take the side of the population, they would be without a trade. Any serious reading of history suggests that the police everywhere maintain their fidelity to the task of performing as bodyguards for money, property, and power.

Kessler offers a paradigmatic example of what Mark Fisher calls “capitalist realism,” which always takes the form of something like the following: *OK, kids, utopia sounds great, but let’s let the serious people take over and work within the given limits of the world before us.* The problem isn’t simply that this involves quitting in advance of struggling, it’s that Kessler’s historical vision doesn’t even follow the principle of realism, or, even better, of reality. History is not on his side. One of his assumptions is that the ultimate goal of the Occupy movement is to animate a new political

majority, a new hegemonic force. There is no discussion, however, of the kinds of force such a majority might exert, of what it might do. There is simply the assembling-in-place of the great 99 percenters and their processual assemblies; these, Kessler assumes, are slowly, somehow, supposed to arrive at an actual political stance. Though this movement might go in any number of directions, it seems clear that if everyone follows Kessler’s recommendation and agrees that the one thing they shouldn’t do is alienate the “middle-class”—if the goal of the movement is simply to assemble and increasingly resemble the already extant social order—then it seems likely that the demand arrived at, eventually, will suffer from the tyrannical logic of the lowest common denominator. It will most likely take the form of a demand that everyone join the Democratic Party immediately to ward off the threat of Rick Perry or Mitt Romney.

Perhaps it’s true, as Kessler notes, that only through agreeing to play by the rules and not offend the delicate sensibilities of the middle-class will the occupations become a true political majority. But it’s not clear what’s to be gained from such growth, if in exchange we make sure to refrain

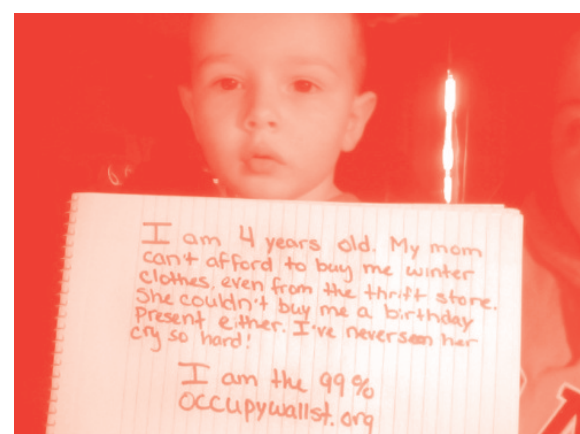
MIKE KONCZAL

**Parsing the Data and Ideology of the We Are 99% Tumblr**

[From [Rortybomb.wordpress.com](http://Rortybomb.wordpress.com), October 9, 2011]

In order to get a slightly better empirical handle on this important tumblr, I created a script designed to read all of the pages and parse out the html text on the site. It doesn’t read the images (can anyone in the audience automate calls to an OCR?), just the html text. After collecting all the text on all the pages, the code then goes through it to try to find interesting points.

It’s a fun exercise, pointing out things I wouldn’t have seen otherwise. For instance, I found this adorable little rascal, pictured below, mucking up the algorithm, as the first version of the code assumed all the ages would have two digits. I found that he, and the sign his mom made for him as a confessional to her son, hit me a ton harder than any of the more direct signs of despair in this economy:



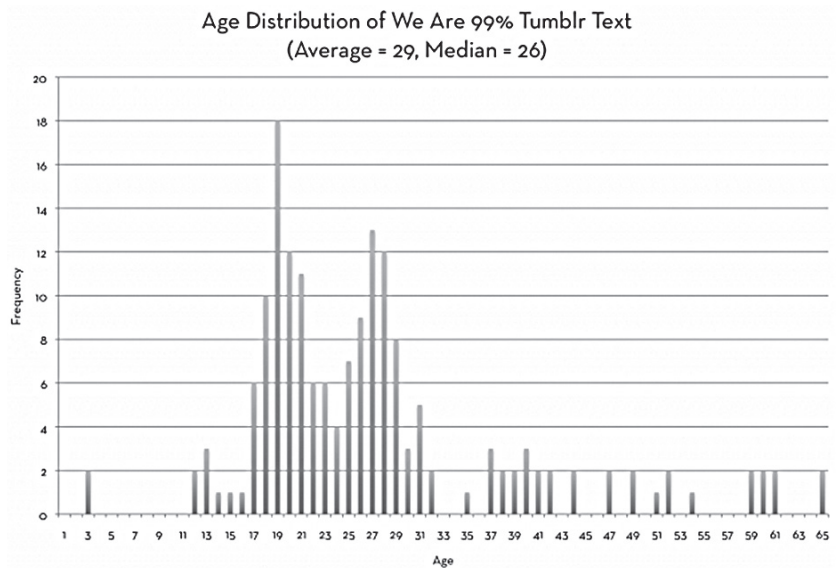
from doing anything that disrupts the smooth reproduction of the status quo. The filling of U.S. plazas and parks with millions of people doing little but complying is unlikely to bring even mild reform. No, to do that we'll have to resort to the old strategies of the strike, the blockade, sabotage and—one hopes—the occupation and expropriation of private property.

Though numbers are, in many regards, decisive, they are not everything. This suggests there is another way we might interpret the Occupationists' deferral of content and emphasis on process, that it indicates a focus on what these occupations intend to do, and how they intend to do it, rather than what they say or what proclamations they release. This would bring them back

to the ideas that emerged out of the original California and New York occupations, which insisted that an occupation was not a bargaining chip but an act of claiming the things we need to survive. Such occupations were not, therefore, about asking for concessions from the state, nor were they simply a launching pad for a new political discourse or a new hegemony. The sign "I am the 99 percent"

retains its ambiguity; signs like "Capitalism Cannot Be Reformed" and "It's Class Warfare and We're Losing" less so. Such stances, still lurking beneath the slogans on Wall Street, might be one way to think about what is happening (or what could happen) in Zuccotti Park: people learning to provide for each other, now that it is quite clear that capitalism can't provide for them.

Going through the approximately 1,000 entries in the tumblr, here is the distribution of ages that I was able to generate:



Given that we assume tumblr and webcams are technologies of the young, the age distribution has a higher tail end than I had expected. There were two major clusters - people around 20 and people around 27, each with their own major concerns.

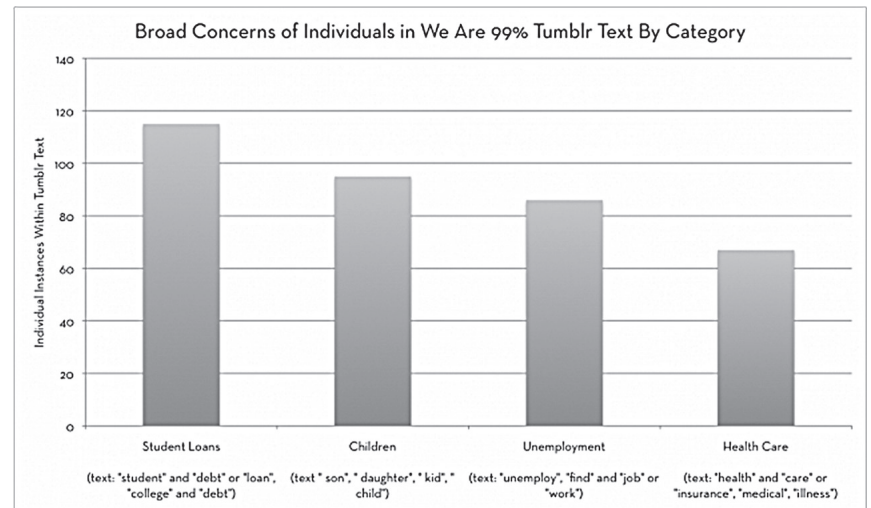
What were the most frequent words? We ate up all the words across all text and came up with the following list:

**25 Most Frequently Appearing Words of Interest in All We Are 99% Tumblr Texts**

word	# occurrences	word	# occurrences
job(s)	272	lucky	60
debt(s)	163	working	57
work	150	parents	52
college	134	bills	48
pay	128	food	44
student	117	house	43
loan(s)	111	car	37
afford	107	education	37
school	89	medical	36
insurance	87	rent	36
body	75	paycheck	33
money	62	unemployed	31
home	61		

"Of Interest" is my call-I removed all the pronouns and other words that occur frequently but didn't get at the chief concerns of the 99%. The major words are jobs and debt, as a quick glance of the site would show. The ability to make it month to month shows up here more than on the glance, with "pay", "afford", "rent", "food" and "bills" right underneath the big items.

Student debt is a meta-concern, but what are the others? Scanning, I totaled four major categories. Here is the number of individual entry texts that flagged each, and the search terms to grab them:



"Children" has a few false positives in it ("It used to be my dream to help disabled children..."), but only a few. Student loans are an overwhelming presence, but it often has the same terms repeated and giant dollar figures next to them so it sticks with you. For all the people indentured with student loans there are almost as many worried about how they are going to take care of their kids.

Scanning the entire text, what is equally interesting is what is missing. There's no signs of a luxury fever or cascading consumption heading downhill. These aren't the signs of people envious of their peers going off to the high-end financial sector and then getting bailed out. The only time luxuries are mentioned are in a mode of denial ("We do not own HD TVs, expensive automobiles, use cable TV."). The only time unions are mentioned are in retreat and defeat ("No union", "threatend [sic] by funding cuts and union busting"). So how to theorize this?

**IDEOLOGY**

So if the 99% Tumblr was a PAC, what would its demands look like, and what ideology would it presuppose? Freddie DeBoer is discouraged after reading the 99% tumblr. He's concerned it reflects a desire for restoration of the glory days of the 90s-00s, and "this country cannot be fixed by wishing to go back to the economics of 2005." Concerned that the solidarity is one that, at most, is a I-got-mine-you-go-get-yours form of neoliberalism (as he imagines it, "I went to college and I don't have the job and the car and the lifestyle I was promised"), DeBoer is worried that We Are the 99% isn't "a rejection of our failing order. It is an embrace of it in the most cynical terms."

With all due respect to DeBoer, the demands I found aren't the ones of the go-go 90s-00s, but instead far more ancient cry, one of premodernity and antiquity.

Let's bring up a favorite quote around here. Anthropologist David Graeber cites historian Moses Finley, who identified "the perennial revolutionary programme of antiquity,



Charles Petersen

## The Politics of the Poor

Who are they and what are their demands? everyone immediately demanded to know. The puzzlement showed how the movement that began on September 17 as Occupy Wall Street differs from the great social movements of the past fifty years. In a more politically legible and familiar world, poor people would be more like gay people: distributed throughout the population, with a new generation born to Republican and Democratic households alike. (Every year more adolescents and young adults would come out: "Dad, I don't know how to tell you this—I'm poor, and I always have been.") Those weighed down by college loans would seem, as a class, more like women: encountering few formal barriers to success but self-evident exclusion from the commanding heights. (Only eleven percent of American corporate board members are women; what still smaller percentage took on significant student debt?) The unemployed would be more like African-Americans during the civil rights era; they could march down the street without anyone from Fox News insisting that they are nothing but a bunch of "kids" (forty-five percent of whom, aged 16-29, are currently unemployed) or "washed-up protesters" (the average length of unemployment of workers aged 55-64—in other words, the veterans of Woodstock—is forty-five weeks.)

The celebrated social movements of the past half century achieved their successes—however achingly partial they remain—by demanding full citizenship for Americans whose racial or sexual identity barred them from equality under the law and equal economic opportunity. The different challenge facing Occupy Wall Street can be seen, ironically, in the movement's most distinctive slogan: We are the 99 percent. Pretty funny when a Canadian-launched agitation, started by a few hundred people, claims to represent 310 million Americans! The problem here isn't the more ordinary one of gathering a disenfranchised group into We, the people... That particular story of freedom,

cancel debts and redistribute the land, the slogan of a peasantry, not of a working class." And think through these cases. The overwhelming majority of these statements are actionable demands in the form of (i) free us from the bondage of these debts and (ii) give us a bare minimum to survive on in order to lead decent lives (or, in pre-Industrial terms, give us some land). In Finley's terms, these are the demands of a peasantry, not a working class.

The actual ideology of modernity, broadly speaking, is absent. There isn't the affluenza of Freddie's worries, no demands for cheap gas, cheaper credit, giant houses, bigger electronics all under the cynical "Ownership Society" banner. The demands are broadly health care, education and not to feel exploited at the high-level, and the desire to not live month-to-month on bills, food and rent and under less of the burden of debt at the practical level.

# DAY 36

with a deep moral and legal basis in American life, extends from the elimination of property qualifications for white male voters starting in 1811 to the gay marriage victories of 2011. It's another thing entirely to redefine the American populace at large as an excluded group, cast out from the democracy and prosperity that supposedly form the national birthright. To imagine that something like this could possibly succeed is about as outlandish as supposing that a harassed Tunisian street vendor could topple governments throughout the Arab world by setting himself on fire.

For now We are the 99 percent doesn't come close to being true. And yet the scope of the claim—99 percent!—indicates the immense promise of the movement: nothing less than to build a left populism capable of rescuing the country in the name of the people of, by, and for whom it's allegedly governed. Given the demoralization of the working class, the corporate domination of politics and the media, the Republican control of the House (and blockade in the Senate), this is undeniably a quixotic effort. No one but our grandparents has a living memory of the last attempt at left populism during a prolonged economic crisis. Can Occupy Wall Street eventually lead to a re-occupation of the fifty states by a citizenry with a new idea of itself? For the moment, it looks like the country's last best hope.

On the "We are the 99 Percent" blog, those who haven't made it to lower Manhattan, and some that have, post low-res pictures of themselves beside handwritten notes describing their predicament. Foreclosures, health care costs, and student debt figure prominently. The effect is to charge the voices of the protesters in Liberty Plaza and around the country with the spirit of the dispossessed across the country. It doesn't matter where we are:

unless we belong to the one per cent, we are all part of the "precariat," living day-to-day and paycheck-to-paycheck. The abyss is never more than a pink slip away, and if things had gone a bit differently, our picture would be on that blog too; some of our pictures already are there. The internet, rather than merely conveying a sense of the protestors' reality to those at the other end of the transmission, now also confers a kind of "virtual reality" upon the marchers by marking each of us as members of the huge social class represented by the blog.

It's this mutual affirmation between virtual and real that makes these protests different from the anti-globalization battles of the 90s and early 00s. Those days of rage, heartening as they were, always felt scattered and far away if you didn't participate. Now, digital manifestations of the 99 per cent are combining with street protests to create an effect far more comprehensive and continuous. When Mother Jones invites you to "Meet 4 Middle-Class Americans Who've Been Politicized by #OccupyWallStreet," the identity of the quartet doesn't expand to the whole gathering movement, but contracts to the four. When, on the other hand, four more people add their photos and stories to the "We are the 99 Percent" blog, then four more, and then four more, it feels not like atomization but the building of complex molecules. You don't need to be unemployed, poor, or foreclosed upon. You only need to feel like you could be. Who, at this point, doesn't feel that?

The vague identity of the Occupy Wall Street protests, so much deplored at first, has proven the movement's greatest strength. The very nature of global capitalism is to break down all "natural" groups.

The people in the tumblr aren't demanding to bring democracy into the workplace via large-scale unionization, much less shorter work days and more pay. They aren't talking the language of mid-twentieth century liberalism, where everyone puts on blindfolds and cuts slices of pie to share. The 99% looks too beaten down to demand anything as grand as "fairness" in their distribution of the economy. There's no calls for some sort of post-industrial personal fulfillment in their labor - very few even invoke the idea that a job should "mean something." It's straight out of antiquity - free us from the bondage of our debts and give us a basic ability to survive.

It's awful that it has come to this, but it also is an opportunity. As was discussed in the monetary debate from earlier, creditors aren't bosses; their power is less coercive and much more obviously based on socially-constructed fictions, laws and ideas. As Peter Frase pointed out:

The market allows the strongest (or most craven) members of any identity group to join the meritocracy: capitalism with a multicultural face. Who can complain that (s)he never had a chance, when a black guy and a Latina sit on the Supreme Court? But the relative triumph of the new social movements may have prepared the ground for a more universal movement: with specific injustices against identity groups mitigated, the global injustice of the system becomes even plainer. More obvious innovations aside (the genius of the "People's Mic," the surprising inspiration of the leaderless "General Assembly"), the blurring of identitarian lines and the linking together of different portions of the insulted and injured is what marks Occupy Wall Street as a new stage in the opposition to neoliberalism. What does the ninety-nine percent have in common? That we had nothing in common until now—besides our solitary experience of exposure to the market.

Maybe the left is learning to use the tools of capitalism against capital. Neoliberalism functions by making the virtual into the real and vice versa; it has reconfigured the "real world" of people and things as virtual flows, digitally represented, of quantities of abstract capital. At its most extreme, face-to-face society is replaced by Facebook virtuality, as the immediate relationships comprising neighborhoods and districts are more and more replaced by the national and transnational relationships of social networking, where the insular affinities of family and old friends are maintained at the expense of identification with one's inhabited place. Thus urbanites get involved in the Obama campaign without ever learning the name of their city council representatives.

Occupy Wall Street, like capitalism, also makes the virtual (or invisible and scattered) real (or visible and concentrated), but to a different end. Did the banks recklessly leverage deposits at 30-to-1? Very well, We are the 99 Percent will leverage the 9 percent of the population that is currently unemployed at 11-to-1, to demonstrate that all members of the modern workforce share in a precarious existence. So the apparently abstract class of the dispossessed and the economically precarious begins to recognize in the general public.

Still, what about that 99 Percent slogan? The top percentile in the United States begins with household incomes of roughly \$500,000 per year, ten times the annual income of the median American family. As the leading bloggers of the institutional left have pointed out, even if we managed to raise the taxes of such high earners there simply aren't enough of them to pay for everything we need. The top one percent now takes home nineteen percent of American earnings, as much as everyone in the bottom fifty percent combined—but this still leaves sixty-two percent of America's total income going to the bracket between fifty and ninety-nine percent. It's a north of the fiftieth percentile, among the upper middle class and lower upper class—not just those making more than \$250,000, the lower bound on the Obama Administration's "tax the rich" strategy, but also those making \$104,000, the lower bound of the top twenty percent—that real changes must be made. It's here that taxes need to be raised and ideologies altered. Had Matt Yglesias been in charge of coming up with a slogan for a left-wing protest movement, it would have been, he said, "We are the 90 percent!" Doug Henwood, editor of the mighty *Left Business Observer*, adds, "Maybe 80% is more like it."

Not a very catchy slogan. The problem with any 90 vs. 10 (or 80 vs. 20) framing of debate has to do with the distribution not of income but of class consciousness. Thirty-nine percent of Americans believed, in 2000, that they were already among the top one percent of earners or would be "soon." Soak the rich won't work so long as many Americans still think (in spite of social mobility levels below those of Western Europe) that they will soon number among the soaked rich. If two-fifths of the population identifies with the wealthiest one percent, then explicitly going after the wealthiest ten or twenty per cent would be a sure way to alienate the majority.

"We Are the 99 percent" is a great slogan because it's not really about income and taxation but about representation and influence. The doctors, lawyers, small-business owners and other professionals that make up the top twenty percent may mostly vote Republican; they may wield undue political influence, and their lobbyists undoubtedly buy off members of congress right and left. But no one, including them, believes that they have their hands on the levers of power. It's David Koch

and Rupert Murdoch and George Soros and Bill Gates who get admitted into the control room. Even the thirty-nine percent that believe they will soon join the one percent don't imagine they will get to run the country—they just think they'll buy a bigger house in the next suburb over. Forget about annual income: the top one percent controls forty-two percent of American capital. That's an oligarchy. And if you think you'll belong to the oligarchy tomorrow, you're either a lunatic or an oligarch today.

The occupiers have bypassed the debate about fair taxation to make a move on the system of representation itself. Here is the soft underbelly of American "democracy." The unrecognized consequence of record low Congressional approval ratings is that people across the country are more prepared than at any other time in recent history for fundamental reform of the electoral system. The protests haven't just made visible a large group of excluded people, previously unrecognized; the protests have also hit on a political agenda with previously unrecognized appeal. Hence the sensation, on the part of both old leftists and Jon-Stewart-watching Obama supporters, of something like a breakthrough. Almost the first proposal on the protesters' lips was the repeal of the *Citizens United* decision and the denial of corporate personhood. The insistence that we citizens are the people, and that corporate persons aren't, is so

powerful that it's incredible how rarely it has been publicly articulated—or would be incredible if it weren't for the dominance of the public sphere by just those legal persons known as corporations.

This feeling of the happily obvious, of the self-sufficiently simple, is a good sign for any populist movement, which by definition can't consist mainly of sophisticates. Of course the way to move left causes forward is to make the electoral process more democratic; of course the way to promote such reform is by targeting the industry more responsible than any other for distorting our politics, one with which 80 to 99 percent of this country doesn't identify: Wall Street. The protesters have other demands too, which may never attract great numbers: the end of capitalism, or the freeing of Mumia (a man on death row for so long it sometimes seemed impossible he would ever die, even of natural causes). Still, the occupiers' immediate moves have been so straightforward and so popular as to suggest that the left may begin to contemplate a return from the wilderness. Neither in Europe nor the US has it ever been necessary for

the left to be in office to exercise influence; it has needed only to be strong, and then de Gaulle or Nixon would helplessly enact much of its program. In a Republican debate, Mitt Romney—Mitt Romney!—referred sympathetically to the occupiers as a sign of economic discontent. Romney would say or do anything to get elected, and this includes pledging to erect statues of Michael Moore and Slavoj Zizek in Zuccotti Park. What a truly powerful left wants, it may get, no matter who governs.

The key, for the time being, is that Wall Street remain a rallying point for an argument about money and politics in American life and not become a mere synonym for the financial industry. Joseph Stiglitz, speaking at a teach-in at Liberty Plaza, suggested sensibly enough that the movement get behind a financial transaction tax. To which a protester muttered: "Great, but then the money just goes to the same old people." You could say the protestor was confused: Wall Street and the government aren't the same people.



"STANLEY ROGOUSKI PROTESTING A PROTESTOR,"  
PHOTO BY KEITH GESSEN



Indeed, widespread and large debt loads are one of the most important ways in which my generation differs from those that immediately preceded it...This has direct implications for the left: more than once, older comrades have noted to me that it has become much more difficult to live in the kind of bohemian poverty that sustained an earlier generation of young radicals and activists...

And there may be some advantages to a politics centered around debt rather than wage labor. The problem confronting the wage laborer is that they are, in fact, dependent on the boss for their sustenance, unless they can solve the collective action problem of getting everyone together to expropriate the expropriators. Debt, on the other hand, is just an agreed-upon social fiction denoting an obligation for some act of consumption that has already occurred. The only way to make people respect debt is through some combination of brute force and ideological

legitimacy—a legitimacy that we can only hope is starting to slip away.

Upon reflection, it is very obvious where the problems are. There's no universal health care to handle the randomness of poor health. There's no free higher education to allow people to develop their skills outside the logic and relations of indentured servitude. Our bankruptcy code has been rewritten by the top 1% when instead, it needs to be a defense against their need to shove inequality-driven debt at populations. And finally, there's no basic income guaranteed to each citizen to keep poverty and poor circumstances at bay.

We have piecemeal, leaky versions of each of these in our current liberal social safety net. Having collated all these responses, I think completing these projects should be the ultimate goal of the 99%.

Or you could say he'd hit the nail on the head: in a sense, Wall Street and the government are the same people. (As one of the ninety nine percent tweeted: "Lots saying #ows should occupy Pennsylvania Ave instead of Wall St. Eh? Why speak to middle management when you can go straight to the boss?")

The issue with the reforms proposed by economists and bloggers isn't that they're too complicated for the public to understand—it's that they aren't ambitious enough. A child can understand that a corporation is not a person. The demands made by Occupy Wall Street—when and if they do come—should remain equally straightforward and radical.

The biggest and best goal implied by We are the ninety nine percent is the reconstitution of the American "people" as progressive force bringing about a society that's just, sustainable, and free. An important and neglected work of recent years, Ernesto Laclau's *On Populist Reason* (2005), argued that the complaints typically lodged against populism—its instability, its vagueness, its ideological emptiness—point to the virtues of the phenomenon. If so, this is encouraging for a movement often taxed with amorphousness and incoherence. Populism, in Laclau's model, links a series of "equivalential demands" under the "floating signifier" of the people. The demands equal one another not in importance but by virtue of proposing an identity or equivalence uniting them.

Laclau offers the platform of the late nineteenth century People's Party as an example: to increase the money supply meant to nationalize the railroads meant to shorten the working day meant to abolish the Pinkerton Agency meant to ensure decent pensions for Union veterans, and so on. The "people" were the people who wanted all those things—or enough of them, anyway, to join with others in asking for them all. Of course the "people" of the People's Party wasn't equivalential enough; it neglected black citizens and particularly spurned Asian-Americans. But the floating signifier of the people came, all the same, to cover an imposing number of actual persons. And, as Laclau declares, "The very possibility of democracy depends on the construction of a democratic 'people.'"

A people, in the populist sense, never includes everybody, and any decent American populism will have to guard the rights of the persons falling outside of its shifting self-definition; one task of the ninety nine percent, if it ever attains power, will be to ensure the protection of the one hundred percent. The responsibilities of power remain, however, a long way off. The battle of the moment pits domination by corporate persons against an emergent democratic people. Victory, if it happens at all, will take months and years of effort after these initial promising weeks. Meanwhile a movement is finding out who it is. That it couldn't say at the start means only that it is learning, listening, thinking, growing. "This country has not fulfilled the reasonable expectations of mankind," Emerson wrote in 1838, when the US was still a very young country. Maybe we're not yet too old.



DAVID KEARNS, "OCCUPATION SKETCHBOOK"

Benjamin Kunkel

## TWILIGHT OF THE FOSSILS

Writers on both the left and right have observed about our time that it suffers from a blocked historical imagination. We can hardly imagine the past except in the form of costume dramas; we can't think of the future except in terms of far-off collapse. Meanwhile we flatter or rue our current condition as "the end of history." But our present civilization reflects arrangements exceptional in human history—and perhaps equally fragile. In particular, contemporary capitalism is characterized by an unprecedented dominance of fossilized labor (or capital) over living labor, and of fossil energy—oil, coal, and natural gas—over living energy. This reign of the fossils must and soon will end. Two special and perishable conditions that we have taken for granted are not long for this world: an ever-growing supply of fossil fuel and other non-renewable resources, and endless economic growth.

The words ecology and economy share a root in *oikos*, Greek for household. This suggests the concerns they name must ultimately coincide: the establishment and maintenance of the human residence on earth. But economics and ecology are rarely taken seriously at one and the same time, and conventional wisdom often denies that a crisis exists in either sphere. Few economists and no prominent politicians will concede what was obvious to the classical economists from Adam Smith to John Stuart Mill: namely, that economic growth

would eventually terminate in what Mill called a "stationary state." Mill and Smith focused mostly on limits to the division of labor: subdividing economic activity could only bring about productivity gains up to a point. More recent perspectives have worried about the exhaustion of natural resources (as in the Club of Rome's famous 1972 report on *The Limits to Growth* and much literature since), or about the preponderance of services, such as health and education, over industry and agriculture in contemporary capitalism. As an IMF working paper from 1997 argued, industry and agriculture are, for technical reasons, susceptible to productivity improvements that can never characterize the service sector to the same degree: manufacturing or farming can become more efficient in a way that nursing or teaching, for example, cannot.

Given mass unemployment on a global scale, it is not that further per capita economic growth has become impossible in principle; to employ the unemployed would by definition (and all other things being equal) increase output. But the world economy since the 1970s has been characterized by "overaccumulation of capital," as the Marxist tradition calls it, and insufficient wages. Globalization, as practiced since the end of the so-called Golden Age of capitalism in 1973, has undermined the bargaining power of labor, as the workers of any one country are forced to compete against those of all other countries. The result is a chronic shortfall of demand: workers, employed and unemployed, simply lack the means to purchase enough of capitalism's output for the system to expand at prior rates. Yet even if the world economy were re-balanced in such a way as to ensure an ideal proportion of profits to wages, resource constraints would soon impair the productivity of precisely those areas of the economy—manufacturing and agriculture—in which great advances in productivity have historically taken place.

All together, these perspectives turn conventional wisdom on its head. Politicians and economists claim that unleashing capitalism means growth forever. As the classical economists surmised, and as our ecological awareness increasingly brings home, the contrary is more likely to be true. Capitalism, attaining maximum velocity, begins to stall. The great conservative economist Joseph Schumpeter pronounced that "stationary capitalism would be a *contradictio in adjecto*." More recent work, most notably by

Hermann Daly, has disputed the claim and outlined a stationary capitalism. Beyond question is that a such a state would be very different from the capitalism we have known.

Contemporary ecological discussions are not typically as blinkered or complacent as economic ones. Yet even when they insist on the necessity of reducing fossil fuel consumption, they pass over the consequences of such a change for capital and labor. The green conception of an "ecological civilization" (to borrow a term of Fred Magdoff's) tends toward a hazy communitarianism; the future is pictured as a somewhat imaginary Vermont. Questions of the production and distribution of wealth, of trade and class, are ignored. Economists, on the other hand, notoriously proceed as if the natural world were inexhaustibly exploitable. This tends to be no less true on the left, where talk of resource constraints has often been branded as Malthusian scaremongering, than among orthodox economists. H.G. Wells long ago declared economics a "branch of ecology...the ecology of the human species," but earth's bounty has until recently permitted economics to treat the planet as a mere department of the economy—a combined garbage dump and filling station.

Global capitalism is approaching an impasse on two fronts. First, in economic terms, after five centuries of economic expansion at rates without parallel in human history, a stationary state of growthlessness looms. This might be so even if capitalism encountered no ecological barriers to "expanded reproduction." Yet to this internal impediment to growth, rooted in social organization and abetted by negligible transportation costs, the natural world has added the external obstacle of resource exhaustion. The most immediately threatening



DAVID KEARNS, "OCCUPATION SKETCHBOOK"



resource constraint goes by the name of “peak oil”—a maximum rate of annual production. If peak oil hasn’t yet arrived, it soon will, in spite of the discovery or large underwater oil fields, and improvements in recovery rates for existing fields. (Indeed the International Energy Agency’s chief economist announced recently the conventional oil production probably peaked in 2006.) Peak production of both conventional and unconventional liquids needn’t immediately crash the world economy, as doomsday scenarios have supposed. But a declining supply of petroleum will coincide with a growing global population, and alternative liquid fuels, whether cleaner or dirtier than petroleum, will be more expensive to produce than “black gold,” with severe consequences for global transportation costs.

Nor is peak oil the only imminent environmental check to growth. A group of scientists, including the leading American climatologist James Hansen, recently identified nine “planetary boundaries” that humanity transgresses at its peril: already three—atmospheric concentrations of carbon, loss of nitrogen from the soil, and the extinction of other species—have been exceeded. Rising fuel costs related to peak oil will undermine industrial productivity, while soil exhaustion and an unstable climate—the severe floods and droughts brought on by global warming—do the same to agricultural productivity. In all, we are likely to confront a shrinking or at best stalling economy together with a growing human population.

What is to be done? Global capitalism can no longer be sustained. Two of its main premises—ever-cheaper energy and continual growth—are about to be revoked. Transportation costs, steadily falling over several centuries, will rise dramatically, whether as a result of peak oil or a carbon tax, or some combination of the two. This will spell an end to cheap manufactured goods, but it will also enforce a re-localization of industrial production that should strengthen the hand of labor. Meanwhile, costlier raw materials—their higher price owing both to scarcity and increased transportation costs—will have to be used with greater care, yielding a material culture characterized by durable rather than disposable goods and a re-emphasis on artisanal work.

This relocalization of production will take place in a foundering global economy. The social implications of such a conjunction are profound. If capitalism has generally proved

tolerable to the mass of workers over past centuries, their acquiescence has been bought by growth: the rich got continuously richer, but so did the poor tend to become less poor. A stationary state, by contrast, is a zero-sum game, in which the increasing wealth of one class can only reflect the diminishing wealth of another. It will bring class division, and so class conflict, into sharp relief. Nothing ensures that the result of such a contest will be egalitarian; relocalization—of politics no less than of production—by its nature implies that outcomes will be various. But a stationary state will concentrate many minds, currently indifferent to questions of economic organization, on the necessity of socialism for any humane future society. This need not mean a “command economy” or “central planning”; theories of “market socialism” are well-developed, and even the practice is not unknown. Socialism means, here, broader ownership of productive resources, and a more equal though not necessarily flat distribution of income and wealth.

An expanding human household—predicted to reach nine billion by mid-century—faced with stagnant or diminishing household income: the eco-prospect seems grim. And communities and nations may indeed elect to persist in a vicious and suicidal capitalism. But an aggravated class society and “planetary eco-side,” as it has been called, don’t represent the only conceivable path.

The impending crisis holds out another possibility—one not only of survival, but of renewal. We must learn to imagine a self-renewing civilization of social production and renewable energy: a sort of solar socialism. Economically, this implies full employment and a basic social provision of fundamental goods. But the implications are not only economic. Today politics and culture are both administered from afar; they are the self-interested productions of an elite, delivered to the masses. Societies organized on a more local and egalitarian basis will have the chance to conduct politics and create culture more intimately and democratically than we do today. More modest in their material wealth than the rich countries are right now, they may be immodest in their elaboration of human capacities. Fredric Jameson observed a generation ago that it had become easier to envisage environmental collapse than any revolutionary change to capitalist society. It may be, however, that the two can be imagined as one.

For as an age of relentless “globalization” founders in economic stagnation and drawn-out environmental collapse, the escape from disaster can only lie in a contrary movement of localization: the reorganization of society on a more modest, local scale. Nothing less can interrupt planetary despoliation, or rescue humanity from what Marx long ago characterized as the accumulation of wealth at one pole and the accumulation of misery at the other. Besides, the meaningfulness of human activity is largely a function of scale. And when we elaborate our societies on a smaller scale, our own lives will feel the larger for it.

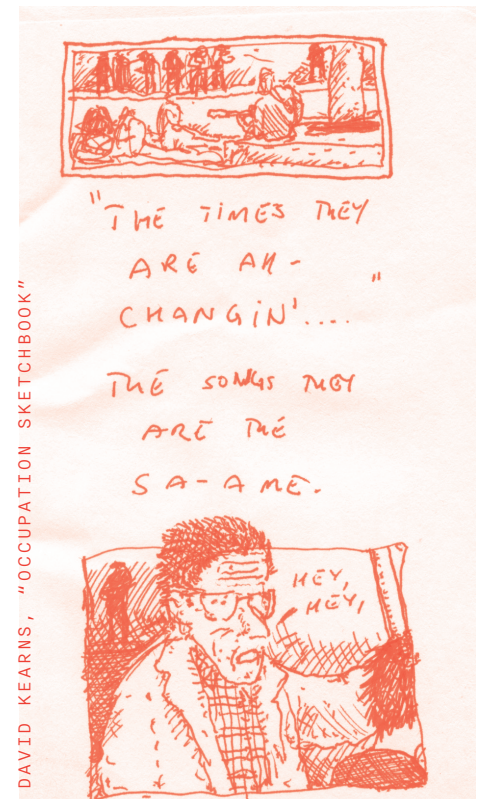
ASTRA TAYLOR

## Occupation Breakdown

It’s amazing how things can change, how fast. One month ago, on September 17th, I dragged myself to Wall Street with a sense of obligation: yet another demonstration I felt a duty to attend though I had little hope it would amount to anything significant. Not much was happening when I arrived so I ate a sandwich I had packed and talked to friends. Two hours later a few hundred of us sat assembling in small groups in Zuccotti Park, talking earnestly and intently about politics and economics, and I could feel something was different despite our small numbers. But with the police closing in on all sides, I gathered my belongings and left, sneaking away as night fell. I was sure everyone would be cleared out by morning.

Occupy Wall Street proved me wrong. I came to the protest tied up by memories of post-9/11 New York, of marches hemmed into “free speech zones” and cops in full riot gear and Patriot Act crackdowns. But most of the people I gathered with at the park carried instead images of Spanish encampments, Greek uprisings, people sleeping in Wisconsin’s city hall and Tahrir Square. The wave of unrest in the Middle East had caused the chattering classes to go on and on about the revolutionary power of social media (how many times did you hear about the couple who named their child Facebook?), but the lesson seemingly learned by a younger generation was that what matters is getting bodies out in the streets. Only then do you have something worth Tweeting about.

In the early days of the occupation, I thought the Zuccotti Park encampment might crumble under the avalanche of criticism levied against it. Individuals who had spent years thinking and writing about progressive politics registered their skepticism about the new movement in public and in private, nitpicking from all sides. People questioned the occupiers’ tactics, complained about the diffuseness of their message, and belittled the lack of demands. Occupy Wall Street, I heard, needed more explicit goals, mainstream support, union



backing, internal organization, radical analysis, insurrectionary rhetoric, confrontational spirit, and to inconvenience the targeted class, affecting their wallets or their good times.

Movements need to be challenged, no doubt. But lurking behind many of the criticisms of the occupation in lower Manhattan, I noticed a hint of discomfort, maybe fear. The sudden emergence of a protest movement appeared to make some leftists uncomfortable even as it excited them. Over the years, many of us had become accustomed to feeling like we had the answers, but that no one was listening. And in a way we had come to prefer our untested theories to messy practice. Movements, I realized, are scary for people who like to feel smart. It’s hard to feel clever when you’re trying to rally people to come participate in something; instead, you’re more likely to feel like a nervous party host or a cheerleader or a nag, silly instead of superior. This goes for attending political actions as well as organizing them. As a friend wrote a few weeks ago, “There is something about the anonymity of being a body in a mass protest that grates on the nerves of those who like their names placed next to things.”

While it’s true, as a good number of my interlocutors pointed out, that protests have to be more than just symbolic, lest they be nothing more than a positive experience for the participants—a kind of primal scream therapy for the already privileged—the same could be said of critique. Critique can be as pointless as hanging out in a square playing bongos, just as self-affirming and self-satisfied. Let those of us who tend towards words on the page remember that.

Despite the incredulity and against the odds, Occupy Wall Street held its ground. In less than a month, the protest went from media blackout to front-page news, and grew from a couple hundred souls in a little-known park to an estimated 1,000 solidarity actions around the world. On October 15th, people from Amsterdam to Seoul gathered in public squares, many of them carrying signs identifying with the 99 percent. Young people taped dollar bills to their mouths in Tokyo.



Cars burned and windows shattered in Rome. Masses assembled in Madrid. In Greenboro, North Carolina my parents demonstrated wearing snorkels and swimming goggles, their signs declaring them “Homeowners Under Water.” In New York, we crammed into Times Square for a mass convergence. Walking there my friend warned me that she never chants. But when we reached Broadway and saw the streets overflowing with comrades from all walks of life, she lifted her poster above her head, exuberant, and began to shout along with everyone else.

What I saw in my friend—who on one block told me she would not chant and on the next was chanting passionately—was an accelerated version of what I’ve seen in countless others over the last few weeks: cynicism melting away, sprouts of hope shooting up through the thawing frost. As the Zuccotti Park protesters held ground, the critics began to reconsider. Skeptical friends ventured downtown to witness events with their own eyes. Occupy Wall Street was legitimized at record speed: endorsed by numerous unions, visited by assorted celebrities, covered by mainstream media, and spoken of sympathetically by senior White House officials, even the President himself. Few now deny that the movement, as I heard a news anchor say, “has legs.”

More swiftly than we ever believed possible, the occupation at Zuccotti Park has opened up a political conversation and shifted the terrain. A recent poll revealed that 67 percent of New Yorkers agree with the views of Occupy Wall Street protesters and that almost

three-quarters of them favor a tax on millionaires. People who have not been to demonstrations in years—or perhaps ever—have taken to the streets across the country. Instead of being ashamed about unemployment and personal debt, people are indignant. Instead of blaming a few “bad apples,” fingers are pointing to the economic system at large. The ultimate sign of early success is that politicians who initially scoffed at the outliers at Zuccotti Park have had to proclaim their allegiance to the 99 percent. Look at Republican hopeful Mitt Romney who first sounded the alarm about “dangerous . . . class warfare” and now says he doesn’t “worry about the top 1%” and that, when he looks at Wall Street, “understands how those people [the protesters] feel.”

When high-profile Democrats like Bill Clinton embrace the Wall Street demonstrations on David Letterman (then advise the movement to throw its weight behind Obama), and Republican House Majority Leader Eric Cantor goes from calling occupiers “mobs” to “justifiably frustrated,” the left needs to adjust and push the envelope accordingly. When influential conservatives are fretting on their blogs that OWS is stealing their thunder (“These people are open to listen to anyone who is willing to take on Wall Street,” wrote blogger and CNN contributor Erick Erickson, “We shouldn’t let unwashed hippies be the only people they hear speaking to their concerns”), we need to recognize, if nothing else, that the Occupy movement has already tilted the playing field and move our goal posts accordingly—

further left so we keep dragging the political conversation with us.

At the same time, there are obstacles on the horizon, some internal to the movement. Here in New York the protesters may very well lose Zuccotti Park, not just because Mayor Bloomberg and his allies want to “clean” it, but because a minority of participants have refused to compromise with otherwise supportive neighbors. Initially, the local community wanted the incessant drum circle limited to two hours a day, a compromise many demonstrators support since the percussion drowns out the general assembly and makes even small meetings difficult to hold on site. The protest has been more dependent on the goodwill of the community board than most people realize, and as I write there seems to be a tenuous but tattering truce. More deeply, the conflict over the noise issue reveals troubling internal fissures, hinting at some of the problems that come from rejecting structure and governance outright. A small number of intransigent individuals derailing a larger group is not, to quote the popular slogan, what democracy looks like. The movement calling for the regulation of Wall Street must find a way to regulate itself.

The call of the 99 percent, though, is bigger than Zuccotti Park. Perhaps the movement is strong enough to survive the loss of its inaugural camp—whether because of eviction or the elements—without losing too much momentum. So let’s be optimistic and assume that enthusiasm for Occupy Wall Street continues to grow. Assumptions about organization—namely the obsession with process and the allergy to institution building—will have to be reconsidered if we want to harness this outburst of political enthusiasm and become an actual force to be reckoned with. The general assembly model, which already masks underlying divisions, should be a tool and not a fetish. Leadership, discipline, and coalition building are necessary if we want to create more than an inspirational counterculture. When the media inevitably tires of human interest stories about life at Zuccotti Park, occupiers—whose tactics have succeeded in making a sweeping statement about corporate greed—will need to stretch beyond the boundaries of their camps and move towards other kinds of concrete action, forging alliances with local struggles and community groups to fight foreclosures and defend fair wages, workers rights, public services, etcetera, all the while remembering that occupation was a means, not an end. The goal was never to hold a park but to change the world.

In addition to working through internal conflicts there will be external threats as well. Should the movement continue to amass support over the coming weeks and months, opponents will step up efforts to distract from and damage it, diluting the focus. There will be misinformation, smear campaigns, and malicious attacks well beyond what we have seen (this morning James O’Keefe, the conservative prankster, was waiting in ambush outside the office of an activist friend of mine). We should be ready for this, all the while keeping in mind how eager we have been to believe the most out-there Tea Party cranks represent the truth of the rightwing. In

response we must work harder to steer the message, aiming to keep the important issues front and center: growing income inequality, the corruption of democracy by corporate money, unpunished cronyism, the obscenity of living in a plutocracy, and the free market system out of control.

Through all of this, even as we take care to be strategic and smart, we need to think beyond what is immediately pragmatic and possible. Of course there is no shortage of policy ideas that are in keeping with the spirit of the movement, from instituting a Tobin Tax to reinstating Glass-Steagall to repealing Citizens United to campaign finance reform. It’s the job of policy wonks to hammer out the specifics of these solutions; it’s the job of social movements to change the political atmosphere so they have a fighting chance of being passed. We shouldn’t be tricked into thinking the lack of specific demands is the Occupy movement’s primary weak point. This spring twenty thousand of us marched on Wall Street as part of the “May 12 Coalition” of unions and community groups, which presented the city government with an in-depth proposal of progressive economic reforms. Occupy Wall Street has had a much bigger impact because it is, at least for now, unpredictable and seemingly insatiable.

This, understandably, makes some liberals nervous. The once-venerable magazine the *New Republic* issued an editorial, for example, casting aspersions on the protesters. Liberals should not embrace Occupy Wall Street, they opined, because of its “extremist rhetoric.” Meanwhile the Democratic Party would like nothing more than to redirect all this outrage and energy for the cause of electoral politics. But as the hundreds of events around the world on October 15th illustrated, this movement is not about the reelection of the same old Wall Street servants but about global economic justice and true democracy. The point, then, is not to get the 99% to rally to the cause of the politicians, but to get the politicians, afraid of missing the boat and losing votes, to rally to the cause of the 99%. Liberals at the *New Republic* and Democratic Party officials should not embrace Occupy Wall Street if that means clutching it close and cautiously smothering its radical and unruly tendencies. Instead, supporters of the Occupy movement should keep pulling liberals and Democrats in their direction—and with them, everybody else.

The question everybody asks, of course, is what’s going to happen next? Will the movement continue to grow? Or will it peak and fizzle out? That’s a decision all of us get to make together. The potential of Occupy Wall Street is clear, but it is everyone’s responsibility to turn promise into real power. It is not up to “them”—some imaginary cadre of diehard or professional activists—to build a successful movement for “us.” The people who showed up in Zuccotti Park that first day and stayed were just regular folks, people who had no idea what the outcome of their actions would be. They took a chance and by doing so opened up a new, constructive channel for our collective discontent. It is up to all of us to take the next step and invite others to do the same.



DAN ARCHER, “OCCUPIED OAKLAND”

# PHASE FOUR

**Beka Economopoulos**

## Internal Memos

Internal memos

From: Beka Economopoulos  
(beka@notanalternative.net)  
To: Occupation ListServ

Here's the thing: our messaging, our strategy, and our tactics must change based on the external landscape. When we become embraced by the Democratic Party and its allies, we must go further than what makes them comfortable. That's if we want to win more than concessions and easy reforms (these currently exist within the realm of possibility), and achieve game-changing substantive/structural reforms (these currently live in the realm of impossibility), that we didn't imagine we could ever see in our lifetimes.

We should aim for nothing less. Why aim for closing up shop soon when we have no idea what we're capable of?

**Phase 1** = vanguard moves in, initiates occupation, is largely dismissed, but staying power piques curiosity, and police misconduct/violence draws attention and wins sympathy.

**Phase 2** = vanguards in other cities recognize potential, initiate occupations. At the same time, initial occupation gathers steam, grows, large membership orgs endorse and give legitimacy that wasn't present before, now the mainstream media start to change tune. Focus of coverage is human interest story of life in the park; and what do they want?

**Phase 3** = mainstream media interest explodes, NGOs, labor, community, and establishment orgs engage supporters, connect existing campaigns to #occupy frame, amplify visibility and suggestion of social movement. Democratic leadership embrace movement, as do party-related and electorally focused orgs. Media coverage attributes power to movement, queries whether it's a Tea Party for the left, whether it will gain electoral power and legislative victories.

**Phase 4** = ?

We currently find ourselves in Phase 3. Senior members of the White House administration, and the President himself, have expressed support for OWS. Democracy for America, a Howard Dean initiated group just sent an email blast to

more than a million members tonight selling yard sales that say "We Are the 99%" with co-branded urls: OccupyWallSt.org and DemocracyforAmerica.org/occupy. OWS is embraced by the establishment as a means to amplify existing agenda. Bloomberg gives tacit "permission" for our occupation, effectively rendering it non-threatening and normalizing it. Result is rise in media coverage of occupation as nuisance to neighbors.

This is a natural and necessary phase. So now what?

We're in this for the long haul. There are no "solutions" that can be presented quickly to make us go away. And so there will be moments where our presence is no longer an uncomfortable and unknown variable, but rather is normalized and integrated. It's in those moments that we have to push the envelope, pry open the space of possibility. That's how change happens. From an actions perspective, that means getting tactical, and mobile, activating the rest of the city, executing higher-risk actions, civil disobedience and arrests. We must draw a line, disavow the Democrats explicitly, make our messaging a little uncomfortable. Yes, perhaps, split the support, lest we not be co-opted. This will be painful, internally, as it won't always achieve comfortable consensus. But to hold this space and expand the realm of possibility, we have to go farther than others are ready to go. It's how this started.

From: Bailey Xxxxxx (name stricken) <bailey.xxxxxx@gmail.com> replied:  
To: Occupation ListServ

It would seem that one of the most obvious ways to create the dividing line between OWS and groups like the DFA is to point out that they're seeking to profit off the movement. (Business as usual.) I haven't seen anything saying that they'll be giving back any of that \$14 to OWS or, better yet, to any groups working with the disadvantaged.

I think if we just pointed this out, and highlighted the other orgs like MoveOn who are riding the wave without actually doing any heavy lifting, people are going to key into that. If we go further and force them to answer why they thought it was ok to profiteer off a campaign going after greed, that would be an interesting moment.

The moment you blanketly say we hate Democrats, that becomes a divisive message and not really what everyone seems to be working at here. However, forcing the establishment Democrats to answer why their go-to reaction was profiteering, that has some credibility.

From: Beka Economopoulos  
(beka@notanalternative.net)  
To: Occupation ListServ

Actually, many mainstream orgs, including MoveOn, have been doing heavy lifting to support this thing, and they truly don't want to co-opt the movement. But the reality is the movement has gone mainstream now, and it will get sucked in to establishment politics.

This occupation was initiated by, and remains largely organized by, anti-capitalists. We don't need to say the "c" word, or the "n" word (neoliberalism, the agenda of the past 40 years: privatization, deregulation, financialization, and globalization, which has led to the concentration of wealth, corruption of the political process, and accelerated the destruction of all we hold dear). We can use softer, gentler terms: the free market, etc. But if we want accountability, regulation, and restructuring of Wall Street and the finance industry we need to figure this out, and it has to play a much bigger role in OWS messaging. And an impending Eurozone crash if Greece defaults could result in a major economic crash here in the US, potentially soon. So there is an opening to push further.

This isn't a denunciation of establishment orgs, there are good people in them and they all want to see this succeed. But they can't lead us there. Now that we're in a new phase, we owe it to everyone to radicalize our message, go beyond what these groups can publicly say.

Let's not collapse means and ends, form and content. Enough focus on democracy. Let's talk about capitalism. Of course I believe in democracy, and I admire and hold dear the ideals of this movement I'm a part of. But to me it's a question of emphasis. I believe we must perform a delicate dance between expanding the tent and growing our base, and towing a sharper line in naming capitalism and/or neoliberalism as the root of the list of ills we name in the Declaration of the Occupation.

*Liza Featherstone*

## WHAT'S NEXT

"So your mom went to Occupy Wall Street before you did?" The young man grilled the young woman, teasing, as they walked along Brooklyn's Washington Avenue, hand-in-hand. "Yeah," the girl said sheepishly. "She gave me a hard time about that, too,

but I was like, 'Mom, some of us have to work.'"

Sometimes it seems as if everyone in New York City—a place normally as dizzily diffuse with topical variety as the Internet itself—is talking about OWS. Acquaintances—including people I never realized had political opinions—ask me about the occupation, just about every day. Many such people have even been visiting the site, or attending rallies in its support. Just about every major pundit and politician—including the president—has been compelled to offer an opinion about OWS, and more importantly, the divide between the ninety-nine percent and the one percent.

There has been much discussion among the left and in the media about the occupiers themselves: is their drumming annoying? Are their pagan rituals silly? Are they dirty hippies? Entitled white males? Trustafarians? Unemployed middle Americans? Is the "human microphone"—their practice, in meetings, of repeating as a group everything the speaker says in order to make sure that everyone hears—beautifully innovative or ridiculously inefficient? Is their "leaderlessness" an inspiring prefiguration of a less hierarchical future, or is it phony, ineffective and just plain misguided? Is a General Assembly really what democracy looks like, or is it just political theater?

Though amusing, I'm not sure any of that matters. Though I enjoy visiting the site, and meeting these wonderfully committed people who travel from all over the country to stand up for all of us against the plutocracy, I'll admit I don't spend much time in Liberty Plaza. That's mostly because while OWS is doing a remarkably good job of occupying, I'm more curious about how—and whether—the rest of us will build a movement, and take its message far beyond the park.

The contribution of OWS is not a small one: it has named the



problem. Examine any transformative social movement in history—abolitionism, civil rights, women’s liberation—and you’ll quickly realize that, in the culture at large, in daily life, huge numbers of people were talking about one thing. OWS has invited us to do this, and that’s a big deal in our attention-deficit society. In the abolitionists’ day, attending a three-hour lecture by Frederick Douglass was considered an entertaining night out. Today, the demands on our political energies are far more confusing. Facebook and Change.org demand every five minutes that we take “action” on social ills ranging from racist video games to female genital mutilation. Focus, unity and sustained discussion are, in this environment, achievements.

The question is, What will happen next? Conversation is needed for social change, but it is not enough. If OWS does lead to any sort of change—whether reforms, like a millionaire tax, or more serious rearrangement of our society—such change most likely won’t be led by the residents of Zuccotti Park, many of whom would not even welcome such a role. To them, occupation is enough, at least for now. They are best understood as artists. A person who makes a stunning installation that makes us see the world in a new way doesn’t have a responsibility to then run for city council.

But those who are interested in changing state policy—and how on earth would we solve the problem OWS has named without doing so?—will have to figure out how to use the energy inspired by the magnificent human installation that is OWS.

What interests me is not the way the occupiers have built their own society in Liberty Plaza—as might be expected, aspects of that are impressive, while others are hellish—but the way OWS has so quickly, and so substantively, penetrated the mainstream. Far more than to the site itself, I’m drawn to the massive public rallies, those moments when as many people as possible flood One Police Plaza, Times Square and Wall Street itself with dissent: working-class trade unionists, men and women in suits, teachers and MoveOn members. Perhaps most surprising are all the New Yorkers who simply defy stereotype. The solitary folks with well-considered handmade signs (My favorite so far: “I am an Immigrant. I Came to Take Your Job. But You Don’t Have One.”)

The thirty-something dads wearing babies. The masked ladies on stilts.

It’s been a long time since all these people took to the streets together. Is this what power looks like? Not yet. But it could be.

*Mark Greif*

## CUT THE BULL

The Occupy Wall Street protests speak to needs that are more than symbolic. The country should become more equal. Its officials could be elected by citizens, not by artificial concentrations of money. Nevertheless, American achievements take root in symbols, too. We have the flag over Fort McHenry, the Liberty Bell, the rampant eagle, the motto of our Republic (E PLURIBUS UNUM), and the buildings on the Mall.

Someday there will be no need to occupy Zuccotti Park. It will be nice if at that moment, after having improving our democracy—since that will be the achievement that has allowed citizens to stop protesting greed and corruption and retire to ordinary pursuits—the movement will have stitched its emblem on the fabric of the financial district in which it began, for tourists of the future to enjoy.

This small symbolic achievement should be the permanent removal of the brass bull from Wall Street, now on temporary exhibit by the grace of the citizens of New York.

It ought to be replaced by a place for speech: a simple speaker’s platform, or Freedom’s soapbox.

This proposal may be the least of the things we need. But it won’t be the worst, and we may someday be grateful for it.

What is the basis of America? Ours is the original and most successful revolutionary nation. It is the state that always stood for freedom. It sustained a revolution of the People against kings, not darkened with blood but flooded with speech.

What is their bronze bull? It is a grown-up golden calf. Freedom is what we Americans are about; innovation, and success, and ideas. So the fat idol should be replaced with a symbol of liberty, innovation, and ideas. It should give way to a symbol of America that signifies speech. The maddened stud is speechless. Bull is our American byword for deceit. The bull means folly, thoughtlessness, and stampede. It charges at the trace of motion, or the single wave of a red flag.

The bull represents the market also when it has one of its periodic

runaways. Idol of motion without cause, momentum that will not stop against good sense or human fences, the bull is a truck rolling downhill, an insentient force. The symbol appeals to gamblers, who love elation but not consequences.

Now, a speaker’s platform is a noble thing. It will be the place where everyone can stand, for fifteen minutes of time, measured by an indestructible hourglass, inverted when the speaker steps up, and speak of new ideas or old. Six policemen and policewomen now guard a bronze bull. Let them keep the sign-up sheet, first come, first served, for that day’s speakers, penciled in at dawn, and warn people when their time is up. Let anyone, any citizen, any visitor, address the country on any topic, and be heard by whoever will listen. Let them record themselves, or film themselves, one step taller than the surrounding heads of the crowd, with all the honor that comes from speaking at this place; all that matters is that there be a place for anyone’s speech, for a new thought to be uttered.

It is not our official place for national monuments. But the enemies of freedom chose the financial center, as the power center of the de facto capital, ten years ago. Today where the World Trade Center stood we have a monument to loss, an ornamented hole. This speaks of the sorrow of the dead. It is also up to America to memorialize the indomitable thing they tried to attack. The ugly private office building which we have used as a placeholder can never be tall enough to reach the lofty elevation of our freedom. Rental space for cubicles is not an American monument. A speaker’s platform is. It would be worth any visitor of the world photographing. In a world whose citizens are still often ruled by autocracy, tyranny, and censorship, they will find it obvious what it stands for: maybe they will climb its step and address us.

The boards our speakers could tread might take many shapes. The construction need only be humble and useful. It should be sturdy and weather-tested. You can see it like a stage, like the low riser in a nightclub, with wide planks the speaker can pace. The boards might be timbers from each of the fifty states; or benches of disused pews from the country’s old meetinghouses, chataquas, churches, and state assemblies. We might ask for a platform donated from the United Kingdom, whose countries contributed so much to our laws and our freedoms; a lovely, equalizing gift to match the

Statue of Liberty, in dignity if not in size. Their London has its Speaker’s Corner, in Hyde Park, one model for this speaker’s corner on Wall Street. But then the boards and their origins could mean so many things. They could be, solemnly, planed from trees in the vicinity of the field in Pennsylvania where a force of citizens brought Flight 93 down. Or timbers from the remnants of a slave ship, slave quarters, a monument to the liberty and courage of those who built America under duress.

Still more humbly, the stage might just be a soapbox. The proverbial platform for any American who has something to say—from the time when one carried one’s own platform, a wooden packing crate, and set it down on the sidewalk, the ferry landing, or the courthouse, to say what should be done. Freedom’s soapbox.

The idea isn’t original. On the first day of the protests, a man in a suit went around Zuccotti Park to all the little assemblies, trying to persuade them their one revolutionary demand should be to replace the Wall Street bull with the American Bison.

As a single demand, it was not such a good idea. As a comic symbol, there was a basic intuition in it. Replace an embarrassment, it said, and a not very distinguished statue, in a place that matters vitally to America whether we wish it to or not, with something that was once, at least, national. It was like Benjamin Franklin’s facetious proposal, long ago, when the new veterans of the Revolution become pompous and aristocratic in their iconography of our eagle, that the national bird should be our indigenous turkey.

Today a dissenter or protester can’t even set foot on Wall Street. The police have erected barricades to prohibit anyone who wants to stand on one of our most important public streets, some of our most important public property, for the sake of the convenience of those who work there.

Let it be clear that there will always be a place for a free man or woman to stand, and speak, and others to assemble to listen and speak in turn, on that street, and, by extension, in the country defined by the Constitution and not cowardice or convenience. Build it! Build the freedom that we have always known is our first right—in conception—but the world must see, in fact!

Jodi Dean

# JUDGMENT

Call the finance sector to account. No one has been held responsible for destroying the savings and security of millions of workers, for eviscerating cities and communities around the world. The big banks and hedge funds need to be tried and found guilty for crimes against humanity.

Call the US government to account—Congress, the regulatory agencies, the Supreme Court. Globalization doesn't require corporations to be persons or the top one percent to have the lowest tax rates in a century. The Congress needs to be held responsible for implementing a tax policy designed to impoverish millions. US regulatory agencies need to be held responsible for actions and inactions designed to benefit the very rich. The Supreme

Court needs to be held responsible for decisions that replace people with corporations.

General assemblies now occupy cities all over the world. Those in the US should begin immediate proceedings for the trial and conviction of those involved in the expropriation of the common goods of the people.

General assemblies are also unique settings for intense, face-to-face engagement among people who for too long have been separated behind screens, gates, and other barriers. Having broken those barriers, we now need to build our fighting strength. Everywhere the ruling class is using the police to intimidate and separate us. When we amass on the streets, we need to be wiler, more prepared, more ready to act. The general assemblies thus need to create and expand opportunities for training in organized action and civil disobedience. We have to know that when 10 break down a barricade, there are 1000 behind them, ready to go. We need to be able to count on the collective power we are creating.

Many smart people are thinking about our plans and demands legislatively, in terms of laws we might pass. We also need to think as judges and executors of laws. We need to judge those who have wronged us and make sure those judgments are carried out.

THE EDITORS

## *Suggestions*

### Nationalize the Banks

Public banks could function like credit unions, with extremely limited risk-taking prerogative. Rich people could still gamble to their hearts' content, but the state wouldn't bail them out if a trade loses value.

### Decent Work

A recent ad on the back cover of a general-interest magazine in praise of a large investment bank for revitalizing a dying industrial center: The bank, by selling bonds for a new basketball stadium, had created a "vibrant downtown scene, where new businesses are opening and existing businesses are expanding." The ad was illustrated by the picture of a smiling waitress with a plate of sports food. In our utopia, no one would be able to create the economic conditions that force most Americans into dead-end service jobs and still somehow think they can convince us to like them for it.

### The Porsche Report

We make rich people report political contributions, why not major purchases? If you're making over a million per year, the public demand to know how many helicopters you're parking in your seventh vacation home.

### Enforce the Volker Rule!

Create a public international digital library providing free laptops, e-readers, and tablets to all, with space to work and access from home (including the ability to take home laptops, e-readers, tablets, etc).

### Redistribute the Tax Burden

Flat taxes on consumer products and services (sales taxes on stuff, sin taxes on booze + cigs) disproportionately burden people with lower incomes because these taxes represent a larger percent of their worth than they do for the rich. Redistribute the tax burden by eliminating these taxes, or freezing them, and hike up capital gains taxes, property taxes, and income tax on the top 1%. No one gets to the top alone, and democracy doesn't work in a feudal system.

### Occupy everything

Processes, imaginations, skies, food, streets, banks, factories, knitting circles, malls. Anyone who is not talking about the failure of capitalism and the success of ows must seem simply out of touch.

### Government-run healthcare, single-payer model!

Boring, perhaps, but how many sick and bankrupt people do you have to know to realize this is still an issue after the supposed solution of ObamaCare that cost the Dems in 2010... all for naught, those idiot Democrats.

### Mandated mixed-income housing everywhere, in perpetuity.

And none of this 80% or 120% of AMI bullshit. Housing that actually reflects diverse incomes

**Free childcare: Twenty-four hours a day child care centers, equally staffed by men and women, paid wages equal to public school teachers.**

**No more "working lunches," of any kind. No one will "take" anyone for lunch, for the purposes of anything besides eating.**

Socialized sperm banks and egg donations!

No more break-ups

**Let's please centralize the means of credit, mandate 60 mpg, and tax carbon at a rate that will aid the eventual stabilization of atmospheric CO2 at 350 ppm**

Free bicycles for all

**No corporate money in elections, ever. And a ban, for two generations, on all candidates with a degree from the Ivy League.**

# SONGBOOK

Most criticisms of Occupy Wall Street come in a spirit of misunderstanding. If there's one criticism that we believe comes from a spirit of joy and hope, it's: "More singing please!"

In the spirit of documentation, inspiration, and fun, here's an incomplete beginning for a fantasy songbook of the New York occupation. Jeff Mangum sang The Minutemen's "Themselves" on October 4 at Zuccotti Park. Talib Kweli performed "Distraction" on October 6. Woody Guthrie hasn't sung at OWS, but he would have if he could have.

If there's one song that's actually been sung more often than any other at Zuccotti, on marches all over the city, and nationwide, it's "We Shall Not Be Moved." It was sung again October 17, on the one month anniversary of the occupation, and is included as the last selection.

## Themselves - The Minutemen

All these men who work the land  
Should evaluate themselves and make a stand  
Can't they see beyond the rhetoric  
The lies and promises that don't mean shit

And all the men who learned to hate them  
And all the men who learned to hate them

They keep themselves hidden away  
They keep themselves upon the hill  
Afraid that they'll have to pay  
For all the crimes upon their head  
And all the men who learned to hate them  
And all the men who learned to hate them

## This Land Is Your Land - Woody Guthrie

This land is your land, this land is my land  
From California to the New York island;  
From the redwood forests to the Gulf Stream waters  
This land was made for you and me.

As I went walking that ribbon of highway,  
I saw above me that endless skyway:  
I saw below me that golden valley:  
This land was made for you and me.

I've roamed and rambled and I followed my footsteps  
To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts;  
And all around me a voice was sounding:  
This land was made for you and me.

There was a big high wall there, that tried to stop me  
The sign was painted, it said "Private Property."  
But on the back side, it didn't say nothing.  
This land was made for you and me.

When the sun came shining, then I was strolling,  
And the wheat fields waving, and the dust clouds rolling,  
A voice was chanting, as the fog was lifting:  
This land was made for you and me.

## Distraction - Talib Kweli

Nowadays we be rocking glasses for fashion  
And fucking with life a fraction  
Covered in Max Factor, hustling ass-backwards  
As sure as Hi-Tek look like Richie from Last Dragon  
Your focus on bogus rappers got you caught up in  
distraction

Distraction. Who fucking who? Who cares? That's  
distraction  
You wish it was you, don't you -- why you asking?  
Try to break the law of attraction  
Get a piece of my attention like a fraction of a ration  
Or a measly little morsel

They suck your blood and you believe in the immortals  
We nocturnal like a sleeping disorder  
See the water drawing away from the shore  
This ain't no ordinary storm  
We fighting for a humanitarian cause  
But have yet to show up in Darfur

The Arab Spring is what it's called  
But they looking at the pride before the fall  
They say it ain't about the spoils of war  
But turn around and tell you how much more the oil  
will cost

Steal the land from the Native American and make our  
missiles Tomahawks

Make him a mascot, dress up like him for sport  
As a final insult to his beautiful culture  
Scavengers, feasting on the dead like a vulture  
Snacking. How you keeping up with my rapping?  
You barely keeping up with Kardashian  
You caught up in distraction

It's the living proof -- you try to make the truth elastic  
as Mr. Fantastic, we recycling these rappers.  
Truthfully, these dudes is plastic  
Coming through the front door blasting  
I ain't talking bout them e-mails  
That you always send to the masses  
That somehow end up in my trash bin  
The game is distraction

Give a fuck if the President wear a flag pin  
Rhyiming is deep as holes Chilean miners are trapped in  
Or the cracks in the earth under Asia Minor causing  
disasters  
Deep cuts way above your minor infractions  
Talk to people like children cause that's how they acting  
Hold their hands like minors in traffic

The captains of industry and the leaders of status quo  
Have a deep-seated fear of change  
For them it's strange -- they wanna go  
Back to the 50's, they asking for a return  
But the days is much blacker, for lack of a better term

We adapted to this culture, but this culture we had to learn  
Came about as natural as a perm on a pachyderm  
These fascists have had their turn  
We passing them German burners, them Lugers  
The next shooters waiting for Superman, they get nothing  
but Lex Luthor  
America's nightmare, vivid as Fred Kruger

Our heroes are dead to us  
Spirit that bled through us  
Endear us with the spirit but the flow is so foolish  
ish What you hearing is precision  
The people so thirsty, what they seeing is mirages  
But this passion, Photoshopping and your YouTube collages  
Coming through like Colossus

Exposing the false prophet  
Taught how to do the knowledge so I'm never off-topic  
A lie is like a potion  
First it gets you open  
Then you swallow whole straight for the truth  
Fuck the chaser, skip religion and the politics  
And head straight to the compassion  
Everything else is a distraction.

## Feeling Good - Nina Simone

Birds flying high you know how I feel  
Sun in the sky you know how I feel  
Breeze driftin' on by you know how I feel  
It's a new dawn  
It's a new day  
It's a new life  
For me  
And I'm feeling good

Fish in the sea you know how I feel  
River running free you know how I feel  
Blossom on the tree you know how I feel  
It's a new dawn  
It's a new day  
It's a new life  
For me  
And I'm feeling good

Dragonfly out in the sun you know what I mean,  
Butterflies all havin' fun you know what I mean  
Sleep in peace when day is done, that's what I mean  
And this old world is a new world  
And a bold world  
For me

Stars when you shine you know how I feel  
Scent of the pine you know how I feel  
Oh freedom is mine, and I know how I feel  
It's a new dawn  
It's a new day  
It's a new life  
For me  
And I'm feeling good

## New York, New York - Kander & Ebb

Start spreading the news  
I'm leaving today  
I want to be a part of it—  
New York, New York

These vagabond shoes  
Are longing to stray  
Right to the very heart of it—  
New York, New York

I want to wake up in a city  
That doesn't sleep  
To find I'm king of the hill,  
Top of the heap

These little town blues  
Are melting away  
I'll make a brand new start of it  
In old New York

If I can make it there  
I'll make it anywhere  
It's up to you,  
New York, New York

## We Shall Not Be Moved - Traditional

We shall not, we shall not be moved  
We shall not, we shall not be moved  
Just like a tree that's standing by the water  
We shall not be moved.

### **Some traditional refrains:**

We're building a mighty movement, we shall not be moved  
[Etc.]

We're speaking for the People, we shall not be moved  
[Etc.]

We're fighting for our children, we shall not be moved  
[Etc.]

We're standing with our sisters and brothers, we shall  
not be moved  
[Etc.]

We've got the unions behind us, we shall not be moved  
[Etc.]

Black and white together, we shall not be moved  
[Etc.]

We're on the road to freedom, we shall not be moved  
[Etc.]

### **Invent your own refrains!**

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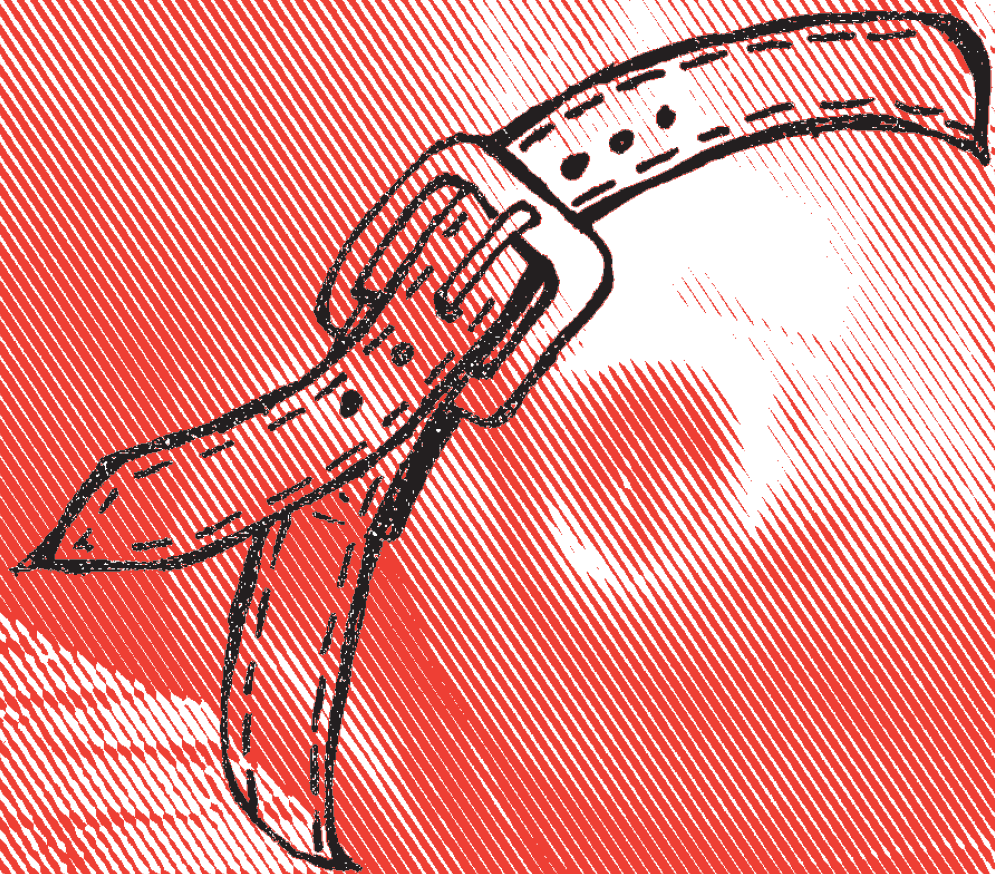
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**MONEY TALKS...**

**TOO MUCH**



**OCCUPY!**