

Preface by **GREG PALAST**, author of *Vultures' Picnic: In Pursuit of Petroleum Pigs, Power Pirates and High-finance Carnivores*



OCCUPY

Dissecting Occupy Wall Street

DANNY SCHECHTER

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Danny Schechter, December, 2011

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THE NEWS DISSECTOR

WWW.NEWSDISSECTOR.COM (.NET)

Dedicated to my late grandfather Max Schechter, a labor organizer and Business Agent for the ILGWU and for Dr. Paul Epstein, a roommate and fellow activist at Cornell University who died in Boston just before the police shutdown of Liberty Square/Zuccotti Park. He was there in spirit

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PREFACE | GREG PALAST

Naming and shaming

DANNY SCHECHTER IS THE TRIDENT SUBMARINE OF the American media. He silently gets underneath their barges of BS and blows the hell out of them.

Occupy does double duty: not only does it give the history of the Occupation from an inside-the-tent point of view, it also serves as the pillory stock to shame the idiot media which first missed the big story, then got it all wrong.

The media made the Occupation in New York and the USA a tale of cops and tarps and conga drums and young white kids with dreadlocks but without jobs. Schechter opens the lens wide and gives you the full picture of a movement which encompasses all of America's dispossessed ... and that's a lot. At least 99% of us. While Schechter gives us the daily diary of the Occupation, it's more than the action in the park, it's about the mounting panic of the One Percent, the power elite, beginning with a "liberal" mayor whom the Occupation forces to bare his billionaire fangs.

They evicted the tent-dwellers but, says Schechter, not the movement. Refreshingly, he connects the Zuccotti Park squatters with the movements around the planet which went before (and grew from), the Occupation. The Occupation invented nothing on Wall Street, it just joined a planet-wide movement already in motion. And that's what gives

OWS power and life beyond holding the real estate.

Schechter grabs you and pulls you into the Occupation crew, and you pick up their enthusiasm with him. And goddamn we need enthusiasm. (However, I admit I'm a cynical shit and wince at the idea that there were no purges or putsches – there were; and I'm more embarrassed than enthused by the appearance of Celebrity Occupiers who did their two-minute revolution tour on their way to the TV studio.)

But the importance of this book is that, once you get the no-shit story, not only the reader but the Occupation activists themselves get an earful of Schechter's damn-good answer to the question: What next? Schechter tells us the end of the tent city is the beginning of a new movement. "It's time for an economic justice campaign that names and shames the reprehensible Wall Street elite, a crew of insiders traders and CEOs – that constitutes less than 1% of the 1%." Because ultimately, it's not about Wall Street. Wall Street's just an address. It's about the Occupation of the economic, political and media heights by that money-maddened silver sliver.

You tell'm, Danny.

Investigative reporter Greg Palast is the author of *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy* and, most recently, *Vultures' Picnic: In Pursuit of Petroleum Pigs, Power Pirates and High-finance Carnivores*

INTRODUCTION | **DANNY SCHECHTER**

Waiting for a war challenging Wall Street

I HAD ALMOST GIVEN UP ON HOPING THAT WALL Street's responsibility for the economic collapse would trigger a political movement. It seemed as if other issues like—environmental crises or electoral campaigns – could capture and sustain attention more easily than the fraud and crime in the financial world. Even as debt strangled millions, and unemployment rose alongside foreclosures, economic issues remained fodder for pundits and self-styled experts, but rarely activists.

Back in 2008, I rallied with the Reverend Jesse Jackson on Wall Street. We had a small turnout, but with no progressive organizations willing to pursue a longer campaign. A second rally, at the time of the bailout drew a larger crowd because some unions took part. But, again, there was no follow-up or outreach organizing after these one-off events.

I had plunged into media work on these issues in 2005, developing a film, *In Debt We Trust* that warned of a financial meltdown. It was subtitled “America Before The Bubble Burst”, predicting what was ahead, but it was my bubble that burst in 2006 when it was released to denunciations as a “doom and gloomer” and “alarmist.

A year later, the market did implode and in some circles I went from being a zero to a hero when the meltdown I feared came to pass. I may have been personally vindicated but the issue still had no deeper political traction except on the right that blamed the economic collapse on the government, not Wall Street.

I was asked at the time “How I knew” that the economy would melt down, but I was hardly alone even if only 15 members of the American Economics Association saw the crisis coming. Most of the media missed it and I started writing two books.

One, *Squeezed*, (ColdType.net 2007) was a collection of my blogs and articles furiously documenting the transfer of wealth to a small group of the super rich.

A second book, *Plunder* (Cosimo Books, 2008) came out before Lehman Brothers fell. It too called for protests, but not many were listening.

I may have been right, but my calls for activism didn’t move those, who in 2008, were absorbed in a Presidential election that avoided most of the issues I was raising. Public anger first came into focus briefly in the aftermath of the bailout that both major party candidates supported.

In that period, I realized that we were not just dealing with a financial crisis but a crime problem. My next film *Plunder: The Crime of Our Time* followed, along with a

companion book, *The Crime of Our Time* (Disinformation Books, 2010) that adds considerably more detail. I may have won some critical acclaim but the issue was still stuck on the back burner.

My crime narrative was overshadowed by a media focus on greed in which since everyone was doing it, no one could be held responsible.

Without celebrity and marketing funds, my work could only reach a small audience.

At the same time, my colleague on Mediachannel, David Degraw began working on exposing the economic elite. His language was less journalistic and more impassioned, perhaps more focused as well. He was making a call to action rather than offering analysis.

He coined the idea of the 1% ripping off the rest of us, the 99! And he began getting attention. In June, he invited me to join some allies of his in a takeover of a small park near Wall Street. Yes, it was Zuccotti Park, the one that later became the base of Occupy Wall Street. I went down but by the time I got there, David and Co. were gone, in despair over the small turnout.

What he and I didn't realize was that our ideas may have been more about seeding the political clouds. It always takes time for activists to "get it" and respond.

Meanwhile, in Egypt and Tunisia, the Arab Spring was electrifying people all over the world. The occupation

of Tahrir Square in Cairo offered a model for activists everywhere.

In June, I visited The Plaza Del Sol in Madrid that a group that called themselves Indignados (The indignant!) had occupied. I wrote about it enthusiastically,

Then, the Canadian magazine *Adbusters* floated the idea of an occupation on Wall Street. Suddenly the stars began to converge. On September 17th, what was to become the movement Occupy Wall Street moved into the Park. At first they were few and ignored, but then after a few confrontations with police, the media turned out in droves.

Suddenly, it was a major story – and I began to cover it for my blog, for Al Jazeera web site and many other websites in several countries.

Here's a collection of my reports and commentaries as I played participatory journalist, reporting less on the day-to-day than on deeper trends. I was not new to social movements that went back in my life to my student days in the 1960's. I was a civil rights and community organizer. I was in the anti-war movement and played a more active role in the anti-apartheid movement.

Activism was in my blood after being brought up in a working class family with deep ties to the Labor movement.

This experience led me, I believed, to appreciate this

movement's trajectory in a different way than many of my colleagues, even though I am from another generation and less familiar with the OWS style of organizing and movement building

I was totally sympathetic – it was an “awakening that I and so many were waiting years – but I was not always uncritical. I want it to succeed but was not unaware of its many contradictions and conflicts.

Now you can read some of my work covering Occupy Wall Street, as packaged by my friend Tony Sutton, the resourceful editor and brilliant designer of the must-read online journal, *ColdType* – <http://coldtype.net>.

I pitched him on collecting these reports on a revolt in process. He said yes.

So here you go.

Mic Check!

Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org

Danny Schechter
News Dissector
New York,
December 2011

BOOKS BY DANNY SCHECHTER

The Crime Of Our Time: Why Wall Street Is Not Too Big To Jail, Disinfo Books, 2010

Plunder: Investigating Our Economic Calamity, Cosimo Books, 2008

Foreword to *The Report Of The Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission Of The United States*, Cosimo Books, 2011

Introduction to *The History Of The Standard Oil Company*, By Ida M. Tarbell, Cosimo Books, 2009

When News Lies: Media Complicity And The Iraq War, Select Books, 2006

The Death Of Media And The Fight To Save Democracy, Melville House Publishing, 2005

Embedded: Weapons of Mass Deception (How the Media Failed to Cover the War on Iraq), Prometheus Books, 2003; ColdType.net (e-book version)

Media Wars: News at a Time of Terror, Inovatio Books (Bonn, Germany), 2002 Rowman & Littlefield, USA 2003

News Dissector: Passions Pieces and Polemics Akashic Books, 2000 Electronbooks.com

Falun Gong's Challenge to China, Akashic Books, 2000

Hail to the Thief: How the Media "Stole" the 2000 Presidential Election (Edited with Roland Schatz) Inovatio Books, 2000 ElectronPress.com (USA)

The More You Watch the Less You Know Seven Stories Press, 1997, 1999



Part 1

The Movement's Pre-History: Egypt and Spain

February 15, 2011

Can the Egyptian people sustain their momentum?

IT IS NOW THE LONG MORNING AFTER, AS PROTESTERS returned to Tahrir Square to clean it up and savor their victory. There were even some initial scuffles with the military that may be over anxious to assert control and show that it is in charge.

In all the joy of the moment – the type of joy we see so rarely these days in the news – in all the electrifying coverage, and congratulations in the capitals of the West that stood by Mubarak for decades, there is still vast uncertainty.

The Egyptian military, now nominally in charge, has no culture of democracy much less any history of fostering real change. Funded with support from abroad, it is subject to influences from all its many new found friends of “democracy,” especially its patrons in Washington.

It has already sounded the trumpet of reassurance that it will live up to its promises to assure new elections while keeping the country’s foreign commitments intact including the peace treaty with a nervous Israel, and, likely, its loyalty to the war on terror as well.

It has now dissolved the parliament and suspended the constitution, meeting two key demands of pro-

democracy protesters. At the same time, it has also, so far, committed itself to keep the structure of the Mubarak regime in place.

How will this sit with a euphoric Egyptian public?

So far, we have seen a takeover, but not yet the makings of a transformation. When millions of people were in the streets, they had power. When they are not, power reverts to institutions and a bureaucracy considered the most stifling in the world,

Egypt has been a police state with more than a million informers. That will not change easily.

Already a CIA assistance team has been dispatched, all in the name of guaranteeing democracy, of course. Israel's spies, the Mossad's, role has been more low key but you can assume its there.

Almost every revolution is menaced by the threat of a counter-revolution and this one is no exception.

On the American right, the big fear stoked by Fox Fuhrer Glenn Beck is from the Islamic boogiemani. "This isn't about Egypt, this is the story of everyone who has ever plotted, or wanted, to fundamentally change or destroy the Western way of life," he and his cronies warn.

On the left, the worry is that the movement for change is not organized enough to insure change, or even clear about what it wants now. Its leaderless momentum

won Mubarak's ouster, but can it win its desire for a real democracy and economic justice?

As Germany's *Der Spiegel* reminds us, Egypt has been plundered by a kleptocracy, and corruption is deeply ingrained, with the military deeply part of it.

"It was Egypt's economic decline, however, that fuelled the greatest anger. In the 1970s, the country could still be measured against economies like that of South Korea. But when the Asian countries began their ascent, Egypt couldn't keep up

"Reforms undertaken that were intended to consolidate the national budget largely benefitted the middle and upper classes. The suffering of the poor merely continued to grow – and with it, the rage. Rumors have been the only information available about the scope of the dictator's wealth. Still, they have been sufficient to fuel the hatred."

Part of the problem has been the way the military dominates Egypt's economy, as Andrew S Ross explained on Bloomberg News

"It's a business conglomerate, like General Electric," said Robert Springborg, professor of national security affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterrey, referring to the Egyptian military. "It's represented in virtually every sector of the economy."

So is what's good for Egypt's GE good for the country,

now that the military is, at least temporarily, in formal control?

In a September 2008 classified cable recently released by WikiLeaks, U.S. Ambassador to Egypt Margaret Scobey wrote, “We see the military’s role in the economy as a force that generally stifles free market reform by increasing direct government involvement in the markets.”

Fixing the economy won’t be easy as another African government (Yes, Egypt is also in Africa) empowered by a people’s revolution found out. The inspiring victory of Nelson Mandela confronted many of the issues that Egypt now faces. Apartheid had wrecked the economy leaving it with the deepest inequality in the world.

Mandela’s movement backed a Reconstruction and Development plan (RDP) to make major changes. It was widely supported by the people who fought for change, but then the World Bank and the IMF stepped in. South Africa was warned it would lose western support and financing if it moved in a direction these powerful institutions opposed. The pressure was intense and Mandela buckled. He abandoned the policy.

All these years later, South Africa remains mired in an economic crisis with nearly 40% unemployment. Its fickle “friends” in the West who expressed so much concern then moved on after their interests were protected.

Egypt needs help and solidarity from its real friends,

as well as the vigilance of its own people, to insure that its Revolution is not betrayed or twisted beyond recognition to serve the interests of a few.

At the same time, what will the United States do to realign policies that assured Mubarak's survival for three decades, policies that got so little attention in a media mesmerized by drama and action.

Will the spirit of democracy that President Obama so eloquently supported publicly lead to a new approach?

Political Scientist Michael Brenner explains the challenge,

‘The fall of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt calls for a rethink of American strategy in the Middle East. Egypt has been the keystone of a set of interlocking policies on Palestine, on the suppression of Islamicist movements, and on resisting the spread of Iranian influence. The American organized and lead concert includes the Arab triad of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

A tacit member is Israel. This improbable coalition is cemented by convergent national interests as each government defines them. Paramount is regime survival. The three Arab autocracies live in dread of popular uprisings that could drive them from power. Discontent varies in intensity – being highest in Egypt as now has been made manifest.”

Manifest it was but will it remain so? When the cam-

eras were focused on the streets, we could see what was going on. As decision-making moves into the suites and barracks, and as the cameras move on, it will be harder for the whole world to watch what happens now.

(Update: As of early December, the military was still in control. It permitted elections that drew 62% participation. The Muslim Brotherhood challenged military rule but could not dislodge it. It appears that moderate Islamicists will win a majority in Parliament.

While media focused on the political fight, the activists who led the Tahrir Square protests and their allies in the labor movement continue to press for deeper change.

They were said to be “decimated” by only winning 15% of the votes. Critics blamed it on their failure to unify their movements to more broadly appeal to the electorate with leaders the public knew and respected. This lesson should be taken seriously by other youth-driven movements, including Occupy Wall Street.)

June 15 2011

In Spain's Tahrir Square: A revolution struggles to be born

MADRID: SPAIN IS JUSTLY PROUD OF THE PAELLA, A DISTINCTIVE dish that mixes diverse vegetables or seafood into a tasty fusion of delectability.

They have now created a political version in the form of Tahrir Square type encampment in Madrid's Puerta del Sol where a diverse mix of activists – old, young, male-female, disabled, immigrant, activists from Western Sahara – have created a beachhead for what many say is the closest this country has come to a popular and distinctive revolutionary movement since the 1930's.

It's been a month now since Real Democracy, a grass roots "platform," as it called, began a march that initially only attracted a relative handful of activists but by the time it reached the shopping district at Puerta del Sol, had swelled to over 25,000, surprising its organizers, participants and politicians from the two major parties.

Only this march turned into a movement when many of its supporters decided to stay in the Square, no doubt inspired by events in Egypt. In Cairo, the vast multitudes agreed on one demand – Mubarak Must Go – even if the movement's origins were later traced to a collapsing economy and mass joblessness among the young. Their

story was driven by social media and echoed in live TV broadcasts. Protests were underway elsewhere in Spain,

This movement became known as “#spanishrevolution” after the Twitter hashtag used to spread news, pictures and footage of the revolt, began with the internet call for a May 15 protest to demand “Real Democracy Now!” The marchers were dubbed “indignados” (The Indignant.)

Activist Pablo Ouiziel articulated the feeling, “Amidst local and regional election campaigns, with the banners of the different political parties plastered across the country’s streets, people are saying ‘enough!’ Disillusioned youth, unemployed, pensioners, students, immigrants and other disenfranchised groups have emulated their brothers in the Arab world and are now demanding a voice – demanding an opportunity to live with dignity.”

In Spain, the activists said they were expressing “indignation” with their country’s economy and the parasitic nature of its two main political parties – the Socialists (PSOE) and the Center Right People’s Party (PP) – which carried on business as usual in a predictable dance of mutual bashing and few new ideas while markets melted down,

They also denounced corruption demanding fair housing, jobs, and a more responsive government.

So, they had moved beyond electoral politics, creating

a liberated village with tents and makeshift structures. They had no leaders and didn't want any. They practiced a form of consensus backed small d democratic decision-making. It reminded me of what I read of utopian communities in which "the people" run the show. Soon, the spirit of what they are doing and asking for resonated in more than 160 cities and towns.

I got there a month after what is known as the May 15th movement was started, and almost by accident. On my way to South Africa, I flew the Spanish carrier Iberia only to discover I would have a 12 hour lay over. Since I was going through Madrid, my revolutionary tourism gene mandated me to hop on the marvelous Madrid Metro, and three changes later surface face to face with the revolution even if the weather seemed well over 90 degrees.

Yes, there was plenty of sol on hand. Some of the activists like Liam who hails from Ireland were slathered with suntan lotion because of the afternoon rays. "We are all fried," he told me.

Although many in the media have already written this movement's obituary, it seems to keep chugging along, almost amoeba-like, decentralizing, going deeper by organizing popular Assemblies in neighborhoods throughout the city. They have several committees working on a program for what they will fight for. Many

are common sense ideas.

While Sol still functions as their public base they already de-emphasized its importance by spreading out, almost block by block.

On the day I was there, a small contingent left the Plaza to stop an eviction and were successful after confronting a landlord and the local bank. They exercise an enormous amount of moral authority as they talk about issues in personal ways, free of political rhetoric and bombast. They politicize by example, not by throwing slogans around, acting in an almost post-partisan manner.

This approach seems to make sense to many who see their society in crisis with politicians blaming each other. In contrast, The May 15th movement encourages citizens to voice their grievances and act on their own behalf.

They tend to think like anarchists and talk in terms of self-management as a principle of political economy.

They are very clear about not wanting to replace one conventional hierarchal party with another. They are nervous about grooming or projecting leaders even as one activist admitted to me that rule by consensus can be excruciatingly slow and subject to obstructionist tactic by a few who can hold the majority hostage.

“We have had people praise us for standing up, “ Liam

told me, “ We tell them not to put their faith in us either but to get involved in the process of change. We can’t do it for them.”

The movement is all over the local press that seems ready to pronounce it a failure even as it documents the free fall of the local economy. There is now a newspaper called Diagonal reporting on their every activity while activists use social media and post blogs on local web-sites.

A local newspaper sampled public opinion. They found many voters estranged from their party and disillusioned and many, across the spectrum, sympathetic to the idealism and energy behind their actions. The very presence seems to be politicizing people if just by discussing the alternative to tradition that they represent

Many were open to the new movement’s style and interactive discourse. One, Bernard, told me “democracy is really bad here. There are two parties but no one really likes either one.”

Says Juan, “I think it’s very interesting that people from different social classes and different groups are joining together.”

Cesar agrees, “Everyone’s hoping this will not be disappear because it is the spark of change.”

Adds Juan, “I am really proud of all of us.”

My language skills limited my access to Spanish speak-

ers but I did talk with David Marty, a lawyer by training, a teacher by necessity and a writer by choice. He sees the movement spreading all across Europe.

“We need a new approach, he says, singing the praises of May 15th’s bottom-up, participatory approach.

What I found significant is that he was not a man of the left. Both his father and grandfather were policemen. His dad won his spurs as a member of a French CRS swat team unit fighting protesters during May and June of 1968 when Paris was a battleground. Now his son writes for Z Magazine and contributes ideas for what changes the movement should ask for.

Like many in M15, he is a staunch critic of neo-liberalism, policies that both major parties embrace

As we sat in the Square as its distinctive clock tower, struck six, I listened to more speculation laced with hope. No one can predict this movement’s future with any certainty, but its active core seems to agree that it has already done more than they ever imagined.

Writes Ouziel, “Spain is finally re-embracing its radical past, its popular movements, its anarcho-syndicalist traditions and its republican dreams. Crushed by Generalissimo Francisco Franco seventy years ago, it seemed that Spanish popular culture would never recover from the void left by a rightwing dictatorship, which exterminated anyone with a dissenting voice; but the 15th of

May 2011, is the reminder to those in power that Spanish direct democracy is still alive and has finally awakened.”

That is the hope at least, that I saw in the Plaza of the Sun.

(Update: As the Spanish and European economies plunged into crisis, Spanish voters swung right. They blamed the ruling Socialist Party and expressed hope that the centre-right People’s Party can fix it. That is unlikely. Austerity policies are only leading to more protests. Spain is an epicenter of Europe’s debt and fiscal problems.)

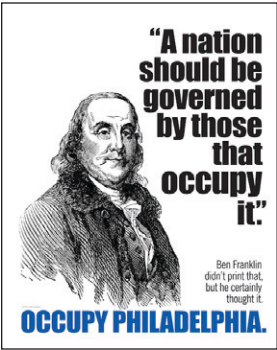


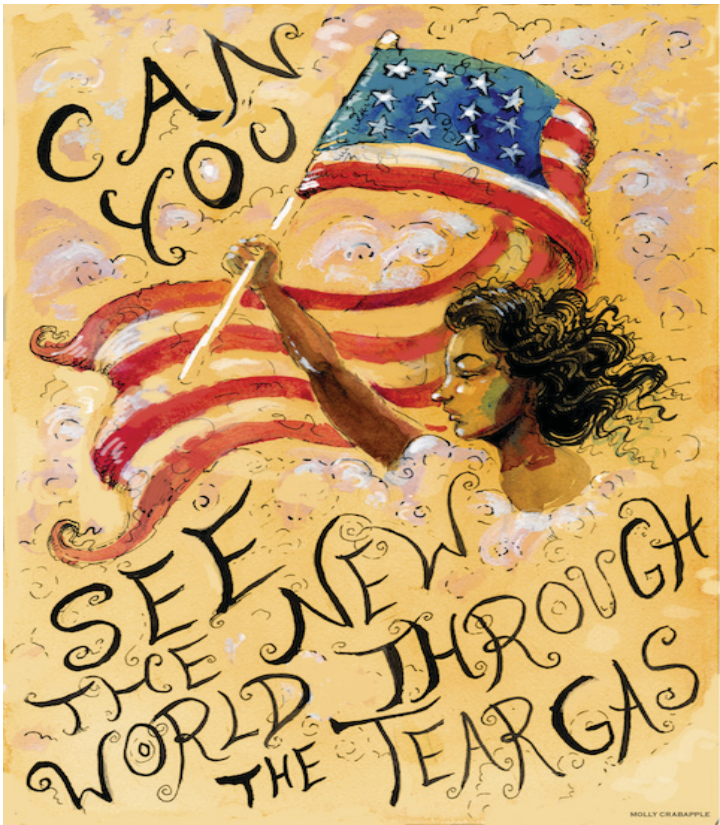
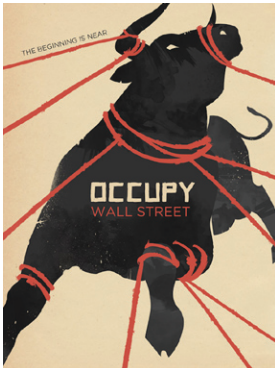
Part 2

Slogans of the Revolution



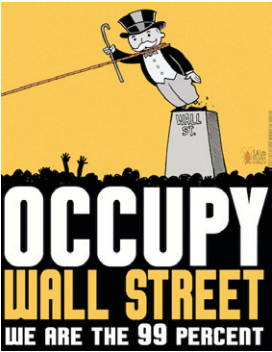
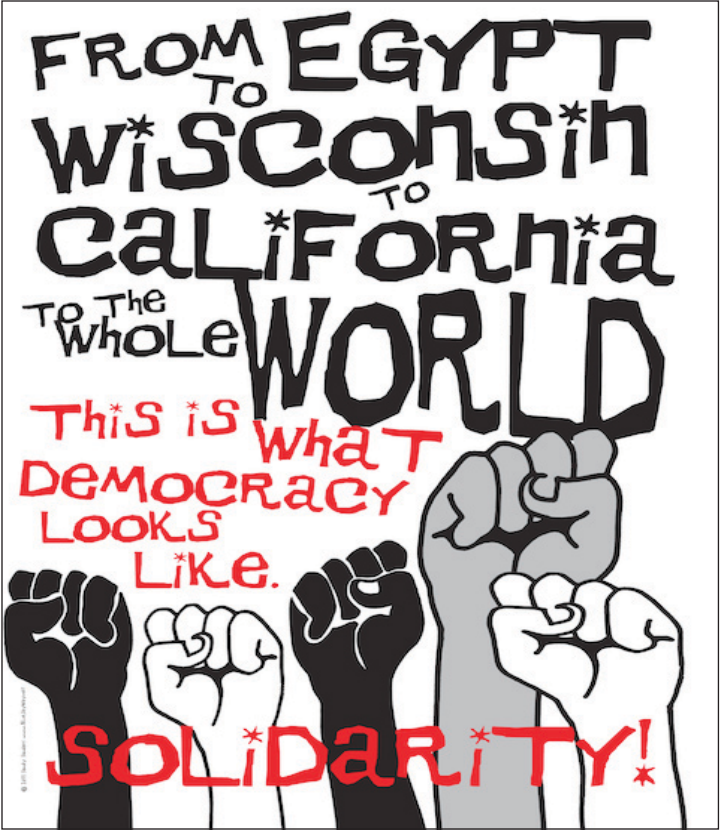
Posters from: <http://occupyprint.org/Posters/Posters>





Posters from: <http://occupyintl.org/Posters/Posters>

Posters from: <http://occupyprint.org/Posters/Posters>





Posters from: <http://occupyint.org/Posters/Posters>



Part 3

September Surge

September 17, 2011: Newsdissector.com (.net) blog

The Autumn awakening: A time for occupation

PRELUDE: SEPTEMBER 17 IS THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE signing of the United States Constitution. Years later, on that day, Francis Scott Key finished the poem that was to be turned into The Star Spangled banner, our national anthem. It was the day of the battle of Antietam, the bloodiest day in the American civil war. It was the day the Camp David agreements between Egypt and Israel was signed, and it was the day that the New York Stock Exchange reopened after the attack on 911.

It was also the day that Occupy Wall Street was launched. That event is now part of a list the Wikipedia compiles for every day of the year.

It defined itself this way:

“Occupy Wall Street is a people-powered movement that began on September 17, 2011 in Liberty Square in Manhattan’s Financial District, and has spread to over 100 cities in the United States and actions in over 1,500 cities globally. #ows is fighting back against the corrosive power of major banks and multinational corporations over the democratic process, and the role of Wall Street in creating an economic collapse that has caused the greatest recession in generations. The movement is

inspired by popular uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, and aims to expose how the richest 1% of people are writing the rules of an unfair global economy that is foreclosing on our future.

The occupations around the world are being organized using a non-binding consensus based collective decision making tool known as a “people’s assembly.”

And I wasn’t there because I was traveling to speak in Istanbul Turkey that week. So I missed the “opening ceremonies” and the first few days, and frankly, wasn’t all that confident that it could last a week, much less two months.

But it was still there when I returned. I began covering the movement not only because of its importance but because of the way it inspired me. The activists I met there were struggling with many of the same issues we were ‘back in the day.” I was struck by their sincerity and devotion to a movement that had become part of their lives and identity.

OWS was a tonic for my own despair with the feeling that what had gone around was back, as a new generation stood up. Many people of my own age said simply, “It’s about time.”

I began covering it with enthusiasm in my NewsDissector.com (.net) blog, in part because in its earliest days, it was largely being ignored by the mass media.

Soon, it would become the subject of ridicule and treated dismissively. The media had trouble dealing with a group without leaders and a manifesto. The first stories were condescending as if it would just be a blip. I had documented media complicity with the financial crisis and their attitude reflected a certain disdain for activists that I had experienced while working for major TV networks.

The spirit of the Occupy idea began to spread, as this call to action by the self-styled Reverend Billy of the Church of Stop Shopping started to resonate with any New Yorkers:

“Let’s get up from our computer, get out of our cars, come down from whatever fundamentalism keeps our America old and violent and profit-taking – and go down to the public square that sits there covered with pigeon shit and the shadow of a soldier on a horse – and sing the 1st Amendment! Start our culture over! REVOLUTION!”

Websites like Reader Supported News began tracking its evolution:

“With the Occupation of Wall Street in its second week, solidarity actions are popping up around the country and the world. Cities currently supporting Occupy Wall Street are: Madrid, Spain; San Francisco, California; Los Angeles, California; Toronto, Canada; London, England;

Athens, Greece; Sydney, Australia; Stuttgart, Germany; Tokyo, Japan; Milan, Italy; Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Algiers, Algeria; Tel Aviv-Yafo, Israel; Portland, Oregon; and Chicago, Illinois.

Cities in the process of joining Occupy Wall Street are: Phoenix, Arizona; Montreal, Canada; Cleveland, Ohio; Atlanta, Georgia; Kansas City, Missouri; Seattle, Washington; and Orlando, Florida.

Meanwhile, I started writing up a storm like this blog entry:

“I went back to #Occupy Wall Street yesterday to check on the state of the stalemate with the cops and to see if the crowd was growing. It is, but not that visibly. There was a media strategy meeting underway when I got there while a teach-in on economics was scheduled for later.”

The beehive was buzzing.

I did get some praise for my latest report on Al Jazeera English, but I was also criticized by Bill Dobbs, a veteran activist on the newly-formed media team for being too analytical and not positive enough. I felt I was being positive, but even mild doubts were regarded with suspicion there. I was enthused, but also worried..

He gave me an editorial from the Newark Star Ledger which he felt was indicative of what I should be covering it. It read in part:

“The group cannot be dismissed as twenty something, nothing-better-to-do protesters. Among them are former white-collar workers who, for the first time in productive, tax-paying lives are unemployed with no prospects for a job.

This nation should listen to this small Wall Street encampment which arrives just as the president appears ready to stop coddling the rich.

For one of the few times since the meltdown, there’s a group of Americans speaking on behalf of the other 99 percent.”

And who are the soldiers of this revolution?

Karen Malpede writes for Portside:

“Our New Left devolved into Weatherman fantasies of violent revolution, yet what remains forty years later are these new committed pacifists, reminding each other in their General Assembly to take their vitamins, stay hydrated and recycle.

They are gentle, non-hierarchical, non-doctrinaire, completely committed to non-violence. There are egos to be seen, but, so far, so good, there are no internecine fights for dominance, no purges, no betrayals. They paint signs with individualistic, often witty, always acute and encompassing sayings: “if you lost your house, Wall Street stole it from you,” and they have a bucket collecting money for their “adopt a puppy fund.”

Everyone was talking about the arrival of left luminaries like Michael Moore Monday night and Susan Sarandon yesterday morning. In the afternoon, Professor Cornel West showed up and there was a hug fest with admiring activists and supportive words from this most eloquent public intellectual. I also saw the priest, Father Paul Meyer, a clerical comrade of the anti-war Berrigans Brothers. Journalists like Naomi Klein, and Barbara Ehrenreich spoke along with Chris Hedges. Amy Goodman and Laura Flanders began doing regular interviews. Soon the NY Times and virtually every major newspaper and TV station in the world followed the lead of the international press based in New York that had jumped all over it.

Occupy was taking off, turning from an action into an event and then into a phenomenon that would soon emerge as a major global media story that had to be treated seriously,

And it still does.

September 21, 2011

Occupy Wall Street now in its second week

BACK IN THE 1960'S, A GANG OF YIPPIES, THE POLITICIZED arm of the hippies, led by the late Abbie Hoffman, an old friend of mine, wormed their way into the tour of the New York Stock Exchange. While up on the visitors gallery, looking down on the trading floors, they threw American legal tender – coins and bills – at the men below, who when they realized what it was, began diving for dollars.

That colorful assault on the money culture took place 40 years ago on August 24 1967, CNN recently remembered the moment, noting, "Some of the brokers, clerks and stock runners below laughed and waved; others jeered angrily and shook their fists. The bills barely had time to land on the ground before guards began removing the group from the building, but news photos had been taken and the Stock Exchange "happening" quickly slid into iconic status.

Once outside, the activists formed a circle, holding hands and chanting "Free! Free!" At one point, Hoffman stood in the center of the circle and lit the edge of a \$5 bill while grinning madly, but an NYSE runner grabbed it from him, stamped on it, and said: "You're disgusting."

What disgusts some, inspires others, and that event is now firmly embedded in the legacy of the American left which may have changed its character but not its dislike of America's Mecca of money and symbol of greed.

In the 1920s, the "Street" was bombed by anarchists but a new non-violent breed today, holding on to the hatred of the wheeling and dealing that drives American capitalism – and perhaps world capitalism – have for the last week staged a non-violent encampment a few blocks north of the Exchange as a part of what they call "#Occupy Wall Street."

The hashtag is a sign of their reliance on twitter and other social media to organize a protest modeled after Tahrir Square and perhaps Madrid's Plaza Del Sol where activists seized public space to launch a political movement. There is no central command, no orders from above. You can watch the action online on a live stream at <http://www.livestream.com/globalrevolution>

This is not the usual approach to politics either of an electoral kind or traditional mobilizations and marches by mass organizations. It has attracted a group of wannabe revolutionaries even as a right wing website called them a "menagerie" and others ridicule their youth, their hair, and their naiveté. It's like a Wall Street Woodstock but so far without the music but that might be coming, as a number of celebrities have dropped by to

show solidarity.

Had he lived, Abbie Hoffman would have been there to witness the takeover of nearby Zuccotti Park that has become the meeting ground of a growing bottom up leaderless movement drawn from several political traditions including libertarians, communists and environmentalists. (Abbie now has 901,000 citations on Google.)

Like the Egyptian movement they are emulating, there is no one political line or detailed set of demands, but it's not clear if that matters

Decisions are made by a "general assembly" in which everyone can have a say. To speak, all you have to do is wiggle your fingers. To make announcements outside of the "general assembly" shout, "mike check," and, in call and response style, the activists present repeat the phrase as they discuss the key ideas that are being expressed by speakers so everyone can hear them. Sound systems are not permitted.

I observed a spirit of good-natured tolerance in the multi-generational group that numbers between a few hundred and a few thousand. (They had hoped for 20,000 but that has not occurred yet although one New York newspaper reported that after New York Police arrested 80 marchers, using pepper spray and mace, the size of the protest actually grew.)

Activists fear the police are looking for a pretext to shut down this fledgling experiment in democracy, as the Wall Street companies want to rid “their district” of people committed to defiance and resistance. At the same time, many of the ordinary cops in blue have been friendly, to the chagrin of their white-shirted supervisors.

Chaz Valenza noted, “Employees and owners of several businesses harbored marchers to save them from arrest. And, a number of sympathetic NYPD officers treated those arrested with respect and extraordinary leeway, some expressing support.

“The police officer told me he was going to cuff me very loosely so it wouldn’t hurt,” said one woman arrested Saturday. Waiting in the bus she found the plastic strap cuffs were so loose her hands were not bound and she could freely take one out to use her cell phone.”

He offered this “box score” on the protests’ tenth day:

“OWS Protesters Arrested: 121 – 200

Wall Street Banksters Arrested: 0

People Power Hours since Day 1 (NYC only): 349,000
(an estimate of the amount of time activists invested.”

There is no doubt that Wall Street is a place millions of Americans love to hate but protests take time to reach a critical mass – as they did in Egypt.

The event has triggered a sizable police presence per-

haps because Wall Street, so close to “Ground Zero,” is a world financial center. Ever since 911, the place had been militarized with an army of security forces and surveillance cameras. (Curiously the protest is against Wall Street tactics like “securitization” in its trading even as the area itself is securitized with no protests allowed at the Stock Exchange, a private company patrolled by New York City police paid for by the taxpayers)

So much for freedom of speech and assembly, when you want to take on the most powerful plutocrats in the USA!

Yves Smith who edits NakedCapitalism.com, a leading financial website wrote, “Welcome to the Police State,” noting, “I’m beginning to wonder whether the right to assemble is effectively dead in the US. 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.”

The police like to put up steel pens in the streets to block congregations. They are literally turning Wall street into a walled off area even as Rupert Murdoch’s New York post headlined it “Fall Street” to comment on the crashing markets.

This Great Wall of New York is nothing new. The first wall on Wall Street was built to keep Indians away. For

many years, the area was taken over as a feeding ground by pigs until a huge fire consumed the neighborhood in 1832. What a nefarious history!

Freedom of the press is also at risk because most top media outlets initially ignored, downplayed or scoffed at the protest. It took mass arrests for them to consider it newsworthy.

As the website AmpedStatus.com noted, there has also been censorship:

“On at least two occasions, Saturday September 17th and again on Thursday night, Twitter blocked #OccupyWallStreet from being featured as a top trending topic on their homepage. On both occasions, #OccupyWallStreet tweets were coming in more frequently than other top trending topics that they were featuring on their homepage. This is blatant political censorship on the part of a company that has recently received a \$400 million investment from JP Morgan Chase.”

Despite the spotty and often sneering press coverage – there is no Al Jazeera TV here as there was in Cairo with around the clock coverage – word of the protest has spread, and will continue to spread, Activists from around the country and the world are arriving daily.

These events radicalize participants, and spotlight Wall Street abuses just as they call attention to media complicity and police brutality.

Ten days on, the persistence of the Occupy Wall Street protest is a minor miracle in itself, surprising a cynical media and even activists who weren't sure if they could pull it off a sustained attack on financial power. Young people are showing how political they, in part, no doubt because so many are out of work and deeply in debt.

What will #Occupy Wall Street accomplish? Its existence is an accomplishment in itself. Writes Nathan Schneider on Reader Supported News, "For many Americans, nonviolent direct actions like this occupation are the best hope for having a political voice, and they deserve to be taken seriously as such."

As for the future? Stay tuned.

September 27, 2011

The occupation is nearing its first month: What now?

NEW YORK: THE PARK IS SMALL, JUST ONE TINY BLOCK, a sliver of earth reclaimed from the destructive fury of the 9/11 building collapses. It was brought back to life, complete with flowers and marble seating areas by a real estate baron who had it rebuilt and, then, as an ego exercise, named it after a fellow member of the 1%.

The rich love to build monuments such as Zuccotti Park, which was named by one real estate company after an industry legend. A tribute to themselves and their role models. In exchange for the park, the company won concessions to build more rentable footage, a win-win deal.

Halal food trucks line its south side while police vans park near a surveillance tower that is closely monitoring the action below on the north.

Occupy Wall Street, as it calls itself, sits in the middle across the street from venerable financial firms on one end while, a new tower rises on the other on a far larger empty field called Ground Zero by most New Yorkers.

There's the din of non-stop traffic and construction noise on the outside while, inside, activists assemble as they have for nearly a month in a non-stop flurry of

activity, some of it intensely political, much of it dealing with the more personal issues of survival, like finding a sleeping bag as the nights get colder.

Some deal with cleaning or cooking or disseminating information on websites and twitter while others plan direct action forays into other parts of the city to confront financial power or find new recruits.

The *New York Times* reports that many of those drawn to this improvised encampment have never been politically active before. Tourist buses now pull up on the Broadway side to gawk, take pictures and sometimes engage in shouted exchanges of opinion, most of it very friendly. It isn't always that way. On Wednesday night, after a solidarity march with as many as 30,000 community activists and trade union members arrived to cheers and flag waving, a small group broke away to breach the barricades to Wall Street which has been declared a no-go area by police, in much the same way as protests were not allowed in parts of Northern Ireland during the "troubles."

Constitutional or not, the cops have more power than the first amendment, proving the validity of Mao's dictum that "power grows out of the barrel of a gun." The police response was vicious. They pepper sprayed non-violent activists and arrested five. Still, this was nowhere as bloody as it had been in the 1960's when the Nixon

Administration incited construction workers, known by their hard hats, to attack anti-Vietnam War protesters with pipes and fists on these same streets. Wherever there is big money, bloodletting can't be far away.

On Wednesday, many unions in New York were out en masse to back “the kids” as they called them, for standing up and admitted they were embarrassed into action. Their style was very different, Union leaders spoke through loudspeakers shouting slogans like “Wall Street Was Bailed Out, We Were Sold Out.”

Sterling Robertson, vice president of the United Federation of Teachers, explained why workers were there. He said union members shared the ideals of activists who have been camped out in sleeping bags, “The middle class is taking the burden, but the wealthiest of our state and country are not,” was his explanation.

The occupiers also have a class view, arguing that they represent the 99% of Americans who are being victimized by an elite 1%.

The media coverage went from ignoring the protest to ridiculing it to admiring it, That's with the exception of far right Fox News that has never seen a progressive protest it likes. Its on-air nastiness is almost a predictable knee-jerk reaction.

Some on the right go further. Author Ann Coulter compares the protesters to Nazis in another attempt

to call attention to her extreme views. The more outrageous she is, the more attention she gets.

Jon Stewart's Daily Show has had a field day lampooning the critics who called the marchers "muddled" because they have outlined no program for fixing Wall Street. He showed news clips on how Congress and the government had been unable, or perhaps unwilling, to make reforms.

Actually, many sympathetic economists are being consulted by the activists for suggestions about what the program should be.

There are three groups; one proposes a detailed agenda, while others boil it down to a few message points. Still others feel the time is not right and that the focus should now be on building the movement first.

Similar protests are spreading to as many as 70 cities. They have ignited a spirit of resistance often citing Tahrir Square in Cairo as their model. Many observers don't remember that that occupation was years in the making.

Perhaps that's why so many global media outlets are also camping out in the park too, and, it seems, interviewing anyone that moves, (There are also activists from many countries talking part.)

China's Xinhua News Agency that has just taken out a billboard in Times Square and opened a fancy bureau

there, caught up with me for an explanation for their global audience: “I think this is a speaking for the tremendous frustration that so many people have,” Schechter said, “With the growing economic crisis around the world, and even a new recession or depression threatening, people identified Wall Street as responsible for it. So this is the way they try to target people who created the crisis.”

In the spirit of new media, everyone can become a journalist or be pressed into action as a pundit. (Next, I answered questions in fractured Spanish for a Latin American media outlet.)

The men and women of Wall Street have been silent although one prominent executive was quoted expressing fears about his personal safety. I can’t imagine that the firms who spend millions on advertising their brands can be happy with all this anti-capitalism in the air.

So what now? Occupy Wall Street will soon face what Napoleon faced at the gates of Moscow. The New York cold is not as bad as Russian winter, but it is coming and it will test the occupation, if the Mayor and the police allow it to go on.

The park’s owner is reportedly going to Court to evict them, no doubt at the bidding of the city fathers. When demonization doesn’t work, authorities invariably resort to criminalization.

Paranoia is growing in some circles, too, with fears that the Democrats may try to co-opt the movement. One journalist wrote,

“Wall Street and hedge fund tycoon George Soros sent a signal to his minions and infiltrators when he stated that he sympathized with the Occupy Wall Street movement. Soros’s statement dovetailed with David Plouffe, President Obama’s Senior Adviser, making contact with certain newly-minted “leaders” of the “Occupy” movement across the United States to ensure that they are as politically-manipulated by the White House as a vast majority of “Tea Party” members have been manipulated by senior Republican Party officials and the billionaire Koch Brothers.”

This “divide and conquer” fear seems wildly exaggerated given the bottom-up democratic sensibility of the activists, but what’s a protest these days without a conspiracy theory to question it, whether or not the facts get in the way.



Part 4

Red October

October 1, 2011

Occupy spreads nationwide and is no friend of the president

WHO IS BEHIND THE WALL STREET PROTESTS? THE Republican minority leader, Eric Cantor, has searched up and down, in his usual rigorous manner, and found the culprit.

In his knee-jerk view, it's President Obama. His latest crime: encouraging these "mobs:"

In one sentence, he blamed the President who in GOP conspiracy think, is to blame for everything, including bad weather. He also not so subtly conjures up the memory of the Mafia, New York's perennial bad guys.

In one phrase, Obama stood accused of encouraging these.... pause for righteous indignation – MOBS!

Never mind that if you spend any time at Occupy Wall Street, you will encounter as many criticisms of the President's policies – save the questions about his birth certificate and "real Americanness" – as you would at a conclave of the Tea Party.

Only here, the criticism is different. In that world of make-believe, Obama is pictured as a hard line Socialist. In this one, he is, in effect, a Republican, a backer of the Wall Street capitalists the occupiers are battling.

And if my memory of history has not faded, wasn't it

the British who called the original Tea Party a “mob?”

Let’s not let the facts get in the way of a partisan shmere.

The GOP is in trouble, unable to find a Presidential candidate they can agree on, unable to come up with any program to do anything about the country’s economic distress, and unable to erode the growing public disgust with the Congress they now control. All they can do is snarl like an attack dog.

Their “blame Obama” mantra may cheer their faithful, but convinces few potential voters. The Wall Street protesters are their latest distraction, aided and abetted by the hardliners at Fox News, who wouldn’t be blasting away if the occupations weren’t successful in getting a counter narrative into the media stream.

The Occupy Wall Streeters don’t waste any time attacking politicians because they are estranged from all traditional party politics. There is danger of self-marginalization in this approach, but it also reflects a certain purity of purpose.

Many in the Park fear co-optation or “capture” by Democrats. Occupy Wall Street Is not partisan but has now endorsed an October 15th Jobs march sponsored by the AFL-CIO. Richard Trumka, the president of the labor federation, visited Zuccotti Park and won their support. That nationwide action will be endorsing Obama’s com-

promised Jobs bill.

This does not mean that the protest will align with the Obamacrats. Al Jazeera spoke with Katie Davison, one of the activists who explained their way of looking at the world.

“A candidate is sort of the old way of doing things,” she said. “We’re looking for a new way of doing things that is more participatory and more meaningful. What that looks like we’re still figuring out.”

David Graeber, anthropologist, writer and protest organizer, told Al Jazeera why he thinks young people in the US have reached an especially frustrating point.

“In making a demand, you’re essentially recognizing the authority of the people who are going to carry it out,” he said.

“Our message is that the system that we have is broken. It doesn’t work. People aren’t even discussing the real problems Americans face.”

So far, Wall Street firms have not commented on the protests but their condescension and arrogance is clear to anyone at the Park when employees at the big firms on “The Street” drop in at lunchtime as if they are going to a Zoo. (Police block the protesters from marching on Wall Street.)

Even as this movement swells nationally to over 1,000 cities, and even internationally the media picks away at

it with a combination of sarcasm leavened with some growing respect. New York Times op-ed columnists and even the editorialists have been increasingly positive.

So far, the movement has not tried to directly impact on policy even though its marches are driven by signs and chants mounting a frontal assault on economic inequality, wars, phony bailouts, and the many ways they say the “1%” oppresses the 99%

Simplistic or not this view has built a hard charging movement with its own newspaper, and scores of work groups and committees that provide opportunities for individuals to get involved in the nitty-gritty effort. They are building their structures and running a complicated but democratic community within a larger society dominated by top-down politics.

The energy and idealism is evident to anyone with the patience to look.

Not everyone has that patience. As some kind of fortune would have it, I sat next to a talkative Wall Street veteran at a dinner Saturday night to break the fast of the Jewish Yom Kippur New Year.

From his life behind a terminal, selling financial products, or, in his words, “making up stories that his customers like to hear,” the protests are a world away, unlikely to stop his life’s work of endlessly making money from money. His view on the surface was upbeat. This past

week marked, in his view, the end of Europe's banking crisis (He works for a company owned by two French banks.) He seemed to be gloating about a new TARP style bailout there that would fix everything.

For him life is about the "spreads" between what you buy and what you sell.

To him, the TARP bailout "saved the United States of America." He backed McCain in the last election but praised Obama for backing it.

He blames Democrats like former House Finance chairman, Henry Gonzalez and Barney Frank (who he acknowledges were and are sincere), for screwing up the financial system.

He blames the government for demanding that mortgages be affordable and sold on a non-discriminatory basis. When pressed, he admitted there had been predatory and racist lending practices in the past, and that the subprime mortgages were a disaster. But the more he talked, the more it was clear that his real anger is reserved for his own Wall Street bosses, the people who run the firms and are, in his view, totally corrupt.

He was one of those who lost his pensions and shares when Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns went down. He was wiped out and had nothing good to say about the people he once worked for.

Curiously, he was as angry with these men in the

suites as are the folks in the streets. He was just as alienated although he's not about to turn on capitalism and instead sniped at a retired schoolteacher at the dinner for having a good pension that he now lacks. His resentment, insensitivity and sense of class entitlement were insufferable.

Yet, even though he works for a leading financial firm, he saw himself as a victim too – in effect, a 99 per-center.

Where will he stand in the emerging “Mob War” when the “Occupy” Family confronts the Goldman Sachs “Family”?

As the financial crisis intensifies, a social crisis, stranger bedfellows will emerge.

October 7, 2011

Now the free marketers take their shot

BY ITS ACTIONS, OCCUPY WALL STREET IS PUNCTURING myths like these:

1. The Myth that direct action against the center of financial power cannot be sustained.

2. The Myth that New York City is a bastion of liberalism and tolerance with its Mayor from Wall Street and its cops recipients of a well timed \$4.6 million dollar donation from JP Morgan Chase whose bank up the street from the protest is guarded by – no guess needed – officers of the NYPD.

3. The Myth that police violence only happens in other countries, not in the big apple where we are far too sophisticated to have a Police department lead/encourage hundreds of protesters to cross a bridge via its roadway and then conveniently have buses and reinforcements on the other side to scoop them up.

They turned a bridge to Brooklyn into a bridge to jail without anyone having to pass GO or collect \$200 as you would in a game of Monopoly. The cops have a monopoly in this game, a monopoly on force – and use it.

4. The Myth that people of different political persuasions – Democrats, Socialists, and even Ron Paul liber-

tarians can't make common cause and eat donated Pizza together in a public park to take a stand together against abuses by the 1% of the elite against 99% of the people.

But now, some conservatives in the name of the free market, are baiting activists as uninformed and seeking to discredit what they are doing, with an ideological attack.

Leading the charge is a website called The Daily Bell, ringing a pro-capitalist mantra to put down the protest. Their analysis has been promoted by the Drudge Report and other right-leaning outlets

Unlike much of the media that at first ignored the protests and then ridiculed it, they take a more patronizing approach:

The charge:

“Despite their honest intentions, many of the Occupy Wall Street protesters are being suckered into a trap and calling for the very “solutions” that are part of the financial elite’s agenda to torpedo the American middle class – higher taxes and more big government. – Prison Planet lede via Drudge Report

Dominant Social Theme: It’s all Wall Street’s fault. Government needs to write (SIC: RIGHT!) the wrongs of capitalism.”

Never mind that no one at the protests has said this, and that their General Assembly has yet to agree on rem-

edies to their protest that focuses on corporate abuses, aided and abetted by Wall Street firms, and their allies in real estate and insurance.

Instead, their accusers hammer protesters for things they believe they *will* say, not what they have said.

These “pinheads,” to use a Bill O’Reillyism, who defend the abstraction of a free market don’t want to discuss how we got into this mess.

They see the world as business-good versus government-bad, despite all the contradictions of government subsidies and bailouts of financial institutions that effectively collapsed thanks to their own fraudulent practices and the greed of those that run them. They say nothing about the banks that have never seen an outrageous compensation package or oversized bonus they would reject.

Never mind that, Ayn Rand supporter and former Fed head Alan Greenspan’s admitted that fraud was pervasive in the lead-up to the financial collapse.

Never mind that it was Republican and former Goldman Sachs CEO Hank Paulson who first initiated the \$700 billion TARP bailout of the big banks in 2007, and another Republican and original Bush appointee, Ben Bernanke, who secretly printed up trillions of dollars to spread like manna from heaven on banksters worldwide.

Never mind that many of the government remedies that the right denounce came about because of the predatory lending and racially discriminatory practices that “red-lined” minority communities in the late eighties and early 90’s denying homes to people of color.

The Daily Bell of its day and its cohorts, were not ringing their bells to expose blatant racism that distorted their beloved markets then, or massive financial crimes that do so today. They were saying nothing about this, then or now.

These ideologues are too smart to totally deny that Wall Street MAY be part of the problem.

“Of course,” The Daily Bell whines, “Wall Street is PART of the problem, but it’s a much larger problem, and Wall Street is ultimately, for the most part, a transactional mechanism. The issues of failing Western regulatory democracies and their eroding money stuff cannot simply be laid at the feet of the securities business, no matter how powerful it seems. The real controllers are to be seen elsewhere.

In the past these controllers have been able to effectively disguise their presence and influence. They do it by misdirection and by using money power to blame the private sector for the depredations of the West’s central banking economy. The mainstream media is extremely important to this effort ...”

So now we have the corporate media in which all the largest companies in America advertise and back the economic elite being blamed for discrediting the business order.

What world are these people living in? Even in Austria, the apparent and mythic homeland of their beloved economics school, no one buys this claptrap.

“Now Occupy Wall Street – evidently and obviously a dialectical enterprise funded by these same elites (at least in part) – is giving them a moment of hope ...” or so they imagine.

“Evidently and obviously” are words that evidently and obviously need no evidence to back them up with anything approaching evidence in this faith-based world.

They justify this faux attack, finally, if you can work your way to the end of the dense diatribe, with these words, “It is not bankers who have immense power, but central bankers and their controllers, the elite Anglosphere families that run central banking and distribute its tens of trillions of “money created from nothing.”

This masked reference to unnamed “Anglosphere families” smacks of the phrasing of that anti-Semitic tract, the Protocols of Zion without mentioning any chosen people or whom they are alluding to, of course.

It also doesn’t mention that our Central bank, the Federal Reserve, is privately owned, not a government insti-

tution, run by the banks and for the banks. Most people don't know this, of course despite Ron Paul's efforts, joined in by some Democrats, to explain it. (It would later be revealed that the Fed printed and pumped in trillions of dollars to save banks in the United States and abroad. A news outlet had to sue the Bank to force them to disclose a role they played, a role that dwarfed the government's bailout. So much for transparency!)

If only that "left-wing run but right-wing serving" big media would do its job!

Occupy Wall Street's inter-denominational, inter-generational, activist army of diverse democracy promoters are still in the park they have liberated for now and are ringing their own bells.

And in contrast to the Daily Bell, they are, in singer Leonard Cohen's words, ringing the bells they still can ring: bells of freedom, and to use a word always missing in the right-wing discourse, bells of justice.

October 14, 2011

Showdown averted: Occupy Wall Street lives to fight another day

NEW YORK: IT HAD ALL THE MAKINGS OF A CLASSIC confrontation. No doubt that's why all the TV trucks and cameras were in Zuccotti Park in downtown Manhattan this morning.

There was a smell of blood in the water after New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg made a surprise five minute strut through the Occupy Wall Street encampment in the financial district on Wednesday pronouncing it filthy.

I was there and am not sure what he could see in the darkness. He did not speak to anyone and attracted light heckling. He had determined that the police would enforce a call by the realty company that owns and operates the park, nominally to serve the public, to shut it down for a "cleaning."

To the protesters, that term sounded more like "clearing." They saw the cleanliness issue as a pretext for an enforced political cleansing.

And so the conflict flared. Activists and labor unions in New York mobilized. Even The AFL-CIO sent out an alert urging members to go to the park. By 6 am, the area was overrun with sympathizers.

Sympathetic local politicians endorsed the occupiers in the name of free speech. The City went silent, but behind the scenes the real estate company had second thoughts when the telephone numbers of their CEO and international offices were circulated. A rare outbreak of common sense seems to have erupted. The expected 6 am battle of Wall Street was called off – for now.

On Thursday, the occupation marshaled a volunteer army of their own cleaners to scrub the park down. The NY Times featured a front-page picture of activists with the headline, “We spruced up the Park, now can we Stay?”

Deputy Mayor Cas Holloway issued some official speak: “Our position has been consistent throughout: the City’s role is to protect public health and safety, to enforce the law, and guarantee the rights of all New Yorkers,”

“Brookfield believes they can work out an arrangement with the protesters that will ensure the park remains clean, safe, available for public use and that the situation is respectful of residents and businesses downtown, and we will continue to monitor the situation.”

When it was clear the police calvary was not coming, there were shouts of victory and calls to March on Wall Street two blocks to the South. Police mobilized quickly with scooters and horses. One man was reportedly

run over by a cycle, leading to a physical confrontation resulting in arrests.

This festering situation is still underway as I write.

The Police may be preparing a wave of mass arrests after a police commander fell to the ground tussling with protesters.

So far, the Occupy Wall Street approach has been non-violent to a fault but tempers are rising on all sides along with the testosterone of the more militant marchers. This violence could have a negative impact on growing public support although recent police overreactions actually swelled the ranks of the protest.

A march on Times Square is expected on Saturday.

They insist that the city does not have a right to prevent protests at the stock exchange and question Mayor Bloomberg's deep ties to Wall Street through which he and his company has made billions.

The protesters may have the sympathy but Wall Street owns the property. A story earlier this week reported on how many Wall Street firms hire off duty policemen for security details. JP Morgan Chase recently donated \$4.6 million to a police charity.

The Occupy Movement was reported to have sympathizers in 866 cities in 78 countries. It has clearly captured the imagination and support of activists worldwide. More than 700,000 people have signed a global

petition of support.

The Iranian government, under attack for a “plot” against Saudi and Israeli officials has endorsed the movement as a sign of a deepening crisis in the US. (The charges of a plot was later ridiculed in the press.)

This occupation activation continues to focus attention on economic inequality in America and allegedly criminal conduct by Wall Street firms.

It is now a big story creating space for dissenting voices that have been denied airtime.

Far-right writers like Ann Coulter remain on the attack calling protesters “tattooed, body-pierced, sunken-chested 19-year-olds getting in fights with the police for fun.” Walter Brasch writes, “she claimed the protestors, now in the thousands in New York, are “directionless losers [who] pose for cameras while uttering random liberal clichés lacking any reason or coherence.”

When you spend time with the Occupation, you know this is blatantly untrue but we are in a world where images create impressions that shape conflicting narratives.

Occupy Wall Street has lived to fight another day, but not all the occupations have. Police raided Occupy San Diego, vamped on activists in Austin, Texas, and arrested 100 in Boston, Massachusetts.”

Many see themselves as part of an awakening, an

“American Autumn” in the spirit of the Arab Spring
There is an ongoing and intensifying face-off between the upholders of a selective “law and order” and a movement for economic justice.

Writes journalist John Pilger, “The Occupy Wall Street Movement is one of the most exciting signs that the US resistance is finally waking from its Obama-induced sleep. This is the critical issue, above all others, that will ignite support across the US. On the day in 2008 that Bush announced the first bail-out of Wall Street, the White House received some 24,000 emails, most of them from ordinary Americans and all of them angry. If the current protests can join up with this populism, in the best sense of the populist tradition, it will give rise to genuine hope – and, more important, an unerring resistance!”

One side in this continuing conflict has physical power but lacks moral power. And that can make the difference as we approach the weekend for the official opening of the Martin Luther King Jr, statue on the Mall in Washington. It was King who said, “We have a right to fight for what’s right.”

October 16, 2011

Martin Luther King Jr. returns to The Mall in Washington

WASHINGTON DC: “MANY PEOPLE DON’T KNOW THAT Martin Luther King was obsessed about how small he was – only 5’7,” revealed Andrew Young, the long time King aide in his protest years and a former UN Ambassador, “and he was self-conscious around taller people.”

“But now,” he added. at the dedication of a monument in his honor on the Mall in Washington, “he is taller then them all in a 30 foot high sculpture alongside America’s founding fathers, and many Generals.”

The ceremony, originally slated for August 28th, the 48th anniversary of the legendary March on Washington of 1963, was postponed after a double whammy: an earthquake followed by a hurricane, until this past weekend.

Tens of thousands of onlookers, many up at 5 AM to get a good seat, and mostly from Washington’s black community, enthusiastically responded to a spirited exercise in black history, and worshipful idolatry with appearances by civil rights leaders and entertainers including Aretha Franklin who belted out “Precious Lord,” a gospel classic King loved.

The speechifying was electric, as you would expect, at

an event honoring one of America's top orators. Occupy Wall Street was on the minds of many.

President Obama gave what may be remembered as the most powerful speech of his career, noting that King had, in a sense, returned to the Mall after nearly a half century.

He was back to stay in a sense in the shadow of Lincoln Memorial where his famous "I have A Dream" speech thrilled civil rights marchers then and is widely admired today even if most of the public doesn't remember that that March was for *jobs* and freedom or that King spoke tenth on a program featuring other remarkable leaders.

Most don't know either that King tried out the same speech out two months earlier at a rally in Detroit.

To his credit, Obama did not dwell just on King's contribution, but broadened the focus to pay tribute to the movement King led. It was the committed activists who went to jail and some to their graves, he said, that we must remember, noting that real change must come from the pressure of the people.

This insight may reflect a lesson he's learned while trying and often failing to prevail in an inside the belt-way game of bi-partisan compromise where he relied on support from politicians whose support required wheeling, dealing and giveaways.

He is aware that his efforts to pacify interest groups

has eroded his image as a change maker although in this hometown mostly black crowd, he could do no wrong as many chanted “Four More Years,” a slogan I first heard in the re-elect Nixon campaign of 1972.

The march followed a day of global protest inspired by The Occupy Wall Street movement that is, in this generation, fighting for the kind of economic justice that King embraced in his time.

And, in fact, another well-known acolyte, Reverend Jesse Jackson, told the vast crowd that King had wanted to stage an occupation of his own on this very same Mall as part of a Poor People’s Campaign he was planning at the time of his death.

The Occupy DC group is camped out less than two miles away on Freedom Plaza but had no visibility at the King event although their presence and example were cited repeatedly, but not by the president.

It was as if the direct action which the black civil rights movement pioneered has now been adapted by others, mostly white, but, not only, yet no less committed to non-violence and democracy.

It may be a youth thing. There was no social media back in the glory days of civil rights activism. There was no Internet, and a far simpler and clearer black and white divide. Fighting Wall Street is more complex than taking on a racist Southern sheriff although some of “the liber-

al” North’s police forces have proven as crude and brutal and with the same result. The more the cops acted out, the more sympathy the movements receive.

Dr King’s kids, Martin the Third and Bernice, a far more fundamentalist preacher than her father, were among the most militant of the speakers urging the crowds to align themselves with Dr King’s ideas and beliefs, not just his iconic celebrity.

Both called for a return to direct action and spoke approvingly of the example of the Occupy movements. Like their dad, their words imploring their supporters to take to the streets soared and the crowd responded as if their father was still on stage. Bernice called for more radical action while Marty, (as he’s called) stressed the importance of activists treating each other respectfully and with love. Dr. King used to liken his Movement to a “Beloved community,” the very vibe the Occupy movements project.

There were frequent references to the world and the need to end US militarism although Dr, King’s gutsy and outspoken opposition to the Vietnam War is not mentioned in the National Parks Service brochure about the Memorial although the President cited it. If Dr. King were alive he no doubt would have opposed Obama’s wars too!

Most of the speakers were sympathetic to the nation’s

first Black President. Reverend Al Sharpton who many see as bidding to become the next King, warned Republicans not to cut Social Security. “That’s not about Obama,” he said. “That’s about your Mama.”

A Jewish religious leader, Israel Dresner, known as “the most arrested Rabbi” in the movement, said he was proud of the disproportionately high Jewish participation in the civil rights movement. He said that while 57% of Whites backed John McCain in 2008, 78% of Jews supported Obama.

It was noted that Dr King, in life, was very controversial and even hated by some in the public including in the Black community.

“Some felt he was moving too fast, others too slow,” noted Congressman John Lewis, a civil rights hero in his youth, reminding the audience that King had been stabbed and hit by rocks, well before he was shot down.

He was often denounced in the media for being a troublemaker and unrealistic, similar to the way the Occupy activists are regarded.

At the same time, there are critics of all the hoopla about the monument because of the big corporations who donated to it. One of the speakers noted that those companies never supported the Movement when it needed support.

Jared Ball, a black professor at Morgan State Universi-

ty in Baltimore charges that the corporate “MLK Memorial is designed to ensure that King be forever separated from his from his anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, work.

Not all corporations were treated lovingly. Former CBS news anchor Dan Rather, who covered King, blasted the corporatization and bias of TV news organizations that have deteriorated since the days of their civil rights coverage.

After the ceremony on the Mall, there was a luncheon at the Freedom Forum, a media organization, for those, like myself, who “Marched with Martin.” (I was on one organizing team for the March on Washington in my student activist days.)

Andy Young noted that Dr King’s message and outlook was always international, influenced by Gandhi’s ideas about non-violence and civil disobedience. He supported Mandela in South Africa too. He said it was not surprising that Lei Yixin, the distinguished sculptor who created the monument called “a stone of hope,” after a line in one of Dr, King’s speeches, is from China.

Young also lit into irresponsibility on Wall Street and was sympathetic to the Occupy activists although like many older politicians, he urges them to settle on a clearer message and a more disciplined non-violent approach. The idea of a “leaderless” movement upsets him.

But then, he paused, as if contradicted by a personal

memory, recalled that many of the same criticisms hurled at them today were directed at student civil rights activists who at the beginning of their struggle were called hot-heads and labeled as irresponsible by some leaders in the black community.

History may not repeat itself but can reveal similarities of spirit and political learning curves.

October 20, 2011

Occupy Wall Street's tech outreach has a new tool

WHEN APPLE INTRODUCED THE IPAD, MOST OF ITS advertising focused on the applications it could showcase. Their most popular ads ended with the catchy slogan, "There's an App For That."

Now there's an App for Occupy Wall Street, as up to date and tech savvy as any of the top of the line offerings available through Apple's App stores. This one not only aggregates news – or at least some of it – in the world press, but offers access to social media to Twitter feeds and Facebook.

There are Occupation reports relayed everywhere in the same spirit of the Mic checks.

Occupy's technology face is driving its support base, communicating its message, and offering a counter-point to the mainstream media which can be hostile and nasty.

Leslie Griffith, an award-winning former news anchor on a popular Oakland TV station says the media has failed our democracy. In an essay on Reader Supported News, she compares media companies to Wall Street corporations:

"The Occupier's remember the Mainstream press

they counted on as recently as ten years ago. That press warned and protected them. Today much of the Mainstream media corporations are owned by the entertainment industry or those who make weapons of war. In fact, making war, movies, and gossip is how these new media corporations came to be so rich. Firing the investigative reporters helped too ... they were so expensive.

The forces of accountability have been replaced by media monopolies not that different from the financial monopolies of Wall Street.”

Last week, a reporter carrying a sign protesting financial fraud was fired when her editor saw her picture at Occupy Wall Street. The website Boing Boing commented:

“Surprisingly many people support the firing, on the basis that journalists shouldn’t “advocate a political viewpoint”. Putting aside that such an objection should only apply to actual reporting, since when did opposing rampant financial fraud become a “political viewpoint”? Around here, we always thought it was just plain old common-sense, law-and-order, foundation-of-civilization advocacy.”

A column in the New York Times discussing a call to “occupy newsrooms” has stimulated lots of debate about the role the media is and should be playing.

Media hypocrisy is pervasive in outlets that relent-

lessly attack Occupy Wall Street with biased and snarky reporting while taking ads from the financial institutions that deserve to be investigated.

This means there are more good reasons for the protest to sharpen its own media that also includes its own “Occupy Wall Street Journal” newspaper and a live stream so anyone can watch online as the occupations unfold.

As a media person, I know how powerful and seductive media attention can be – and it is essential to communicate, in however flawed a manner, with the public at large.

This movement is more than its image, more than its media impact. Its appeal is an opportunity for direct participation, not as a spectacle for others to watch from a distance.

All Americans have a right to free speech and assembly, but exercising it is becoming more problematic, even dangerous, as cities use their police forces and arbitrarily enforced laws and regulations to harass the protest.

Not all the attacks are as physically aggressive as the one mounted by the Oakland Police where an Iraq veteran was sent into a coma when hit by a gas canister. He is now a martyr for the movement but violence, even when not initiated by the occupiers can turn others off or lead them to hesitate before getting involved.

The Occupiers who are camping out in parks and plazas have to be tough enough to withstand the winter weather that is descending on the East with icy snow and wind.

Not surprising, many activists are getting sick as they scramble for warmer sleeping bags and tents where they are allowed.

MoveOn is doing an appeal for the occupiers in New York:

“Occupy Wall Street’s ability to keep speaking up for the 99% depends in part on their ability to hold out against the winter weather. And that depends on their having the right supplies – sub-zero sleeping bags, long underwear, and warm hats and gloves.”

But all the apps and warm hats will not assure victory, that is, if a grass roots movement that has taken on the most powerful financial institutions in the world can somehow hope to bring them down. (In some cases, those institutions are irresponsible enough to bring themselves down!)

What they can do is change the national conversation to insure that the issues of joblessness and economic inequality gets on the agenda of media and political institutions that are joined at the hip with the 1%.

By sustaining their occupations, and keeping up their marches and agitation, they cannot be ignored.

Building this movement will require more outreach, and more alliances with sympathetic organizations in Labor, on campuses, and in the community. At some point, they will have to enter into coalitions despite fears of co-optation. Some spokespeople may have to emerge out of the leaderless environment with its commitment to consensus.

They also need to champion and understand related issues like demanding the prosecution and incarceration of financial criminals and fraudsters.

Former bank regulator Bill Black, a criminologist who sees financial crime as a part of a crimopathic environment, was well received when he spoke at Zuccotti Park.

Wall Street's banks are not only not too big to fail, but not too big to jail if this "crime narrative" becomes part of the demands that power this growing movement.

In the end there has to be a strategy of cumulative impact with media outreach paralleling political outreach, with organizing more important than sloganeering to win allies and take these protests to a new and more effective level.

You need more than an app for that!

October 26, 2011

Why are so many in the media threatened by OWS

THE OTHER NIGHT, I RAN INTO A VETERAN JOURNALIST, A writer who I always considered was among the “plugged in.” Yet when I told him I was reporting on Occupied Wall Street, he plugged out, and stared at me cluelessly.

“What do they want,” he asked, echoing the questioned raised endlessly by TV pundits and editorial commentators.

He didn’t seem to know or care who “they” are, or why they have taken to living in parks to make their point.

He and his colleagues seem to be saying that to understand what’s going on, it all be first compressed into a press release with bullet points they can simplify further.

“I don’t get it,” he sighed.

“It’s about Occupying Wall Street,” I replied, “Occupy-ing Wall Street, challenging the power of its economic power.

Another blank look...

It’s as if we need our politics to follow a predictable format characterized by legislators playing to the cameras, message points, and pithy slogans.

The idea of a deeper challenge to a totally compro-

mised system, driven by big money and special interests is considered by some as an anomaly that belongs in another century,

Extra-parliamentary political movements don't compute for some who want the political debate limited to rituals like elections, traditional "debates" and up and down votes on selective laws.

In their world, politics is best left to politicians with citizens there to look but not to act.

There seems to be three factors at work.

1. Financial issues are treated as exotic, beyond our comprehension and best left in back of the paper in the business pages where obscurantist language makes it so dense that most readers turn away.
2. The upper classes, now referred to as the 1%, and the people who identify with them or uncritically, rely on them for financial guidance, cannot comprehend any critique that challenges their prerogatives and power. They use terms like "unsophisticated" to delegitimize protesters who challenge their pretensions and priorities.
3. Some don't and won't "get it" because it is not in their interest to do so. They shamelessly use their power to impose their will on the legislative process with an eye on loosening or abandoning any financial reforms that force higher standards of transparency.

Example: even as Occupy Wall Street wins public support for its campaign against inequality and challenge big banks and corporations, The Obama Administration is about to stripmine laws to insure corporate accountability.

Mike Taibbi explains the latest way Washington is aligned with Wall Street in *Rolling Stone*: (Amazing isn't it that a music magazine does a better job of covering these issues than our financial media,)

He writes, "Barack Obama is apparently expressing willingness to junk big chunks of Sarbanes-Oxley in exchange for support for his jobs program. Business leaders are balking at creating new jobs unless Obama makes compliance with S-O voluntary for all firms valued at under \$1 billion

Here's how to translate this move: companies are saying they can't attract investment unless they can hide their financials from investors. So the CEOs and gazillionaires on Obama's Jobs Council want the politically-vulnerable president to give them license to cook the books in exchange for support for his jobs program. From the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*:

"All you're going to do is have more fraud. The ultimate losers are going to be investors," said Jeff Klink, a former federal prosecutor whose Gateway Center firm helps clients prevent and detect fraud."

Unfortunately, the Occupy Wall Street activists have, like the rest of the country has not been widely exposed to the considerable documentation around massive fraud by the financial industry.

When former bank regulator and the country's leading critic of corporate fraud, William Black, now of the University of Missouri Law School in Kansas City, visited Occupy Wall Street on October 25th, he was not recognized by most of those in the encampment or by many in the press who are also unfamiliar with the depth of the crimes of Wall Street.

Those crimes just don't impact investors but have hit ordinary Americans hard. They include the subprime mortgages as well as usurious credit cards. Black takes a systematic look at the problem.

He spoke at a teach-in at Occupy Wall Street Tuesday evening to an attentive crowd. It was one of the first lectures about the criminal aspects of the crisis, an issue I have written about in my book, *The Crime of Our Time*. It's important to have more talks like this. More experts like Black will be speaking in the Park in the near future.

Perhaps that's why Elizabeth Warren, the Harvard Professor who proposed a consumer protection agency is claiming she put forward the intellectual ideas that led to the Occupy Movement, *The Daily Beast's* Samuel

P. Jacobs reports she created “much of the intellectual foundation” for the Occupy Wall Street movement. She also talks about her past life as a Republican and the challenges of being a woman on the campaign trail – and says she’s no “guileless Marxist.”

Ironically, that’s also true of many in Zuccotti Park who seem to favor anarchism, not marxism, but at least they have a deeper critique of the posturing of both parties and seem to want far deeper reforms than those proposed by Warren.

Perhaps that’s why self-styled “liberals” like The Washington Posts Richard Cohen can’t find an ounce of sympathy for protester who are being skewered by the Israel Lobby AIPAC as Anti-Semitic based on an incident involving two people. AIPAC has no comment on the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who have been protesting economic abuses in Israel Itself. To his credit, Cohen dismisses the hysterical anti-Semitism smears against Occupy Wall Street that have been amplifies on Fox and other right-wing outlets.

But, as FAIR notes, Cohen goes on piss on the protests. Here’s their headline: “Richard Cohen: OWS isn’t Anti-Semitic – Just Clueless, Repugnant” Writes Cohen, “This right-wing attempt to discredit both the Occupy Wall Street movement and the Democratic Party’s hesitant embrace of it is reprehensible. It’s made possible, how-

ever, because no one this side of the Moon knows precisely what the Occupy Wall Street movement is trying to do. On a daily basis it marches off to some location to highlight what we all know – that Wall Street guys are rich – and their slogans suggest a tired socialism that is as repugnant to me as the felonious capitalism that produced the mortgage bubble and the impoverishment of millions of Americans.”

I have hung out with Richard Cohen at the World Economic Forum in Davos in years past. It’s the intellectual corporate playground of the 1% and I don’t remember anything he wrote with this cranky and nasty tone about greedy CEOs who were getting rich off the poor and the Middle Class.

It would be easy to denounce this hypocrisy, but it is worse because clearly the poobahs of the media lack the capacity to critique their own complicity in the media’s failure to expose that “felonious capitalism” when it might have done some good. They are threatened by a movement that is winning public support because it is also a repudiation their own elite journalism in the service of the status quo.



Part 5

November Blues

November 1, 2011

The political challenges facing Occupy Wall Street

IN THE DAYS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, THERE was a phrase that became a song and then a popular documentary series:

“Keep Your Eyes On The Prize.”

The idea was simple: keep focus. Don’t be distracted. Don’t dissipate your energies.

The Occupy Movement that is spreading like a prairie fire worldwide is attracting critics who want it to take on every issue on every agenda: health care, campaign finance reform, environmental concerns and the like,

All are important and, all are on some level, interconnected but when you try to do everything, you can easily end up doing nothing. Instead of sending out a clear message, you diffuse it, losing clarity and confusing the public.

Occupy Wall Street has been criticized for not having a program or a blueprint for change. Yet, that perceived weakness might be its greatest strength.

When you enunciate a complicated charter, you lose supporters and give others issues to disagree on. You end up having your own supporters debating the fine points of each issue and risk becoming factionalized.

Occupy Wall Street has spoken out clearly against economic inequality – rule by the 1% over the 99%. It has protested the banks and the billionaires and millionaires that dominate the economy. The slogans are simple and quite understandable.

And that's precisely why so many have rallied behind it, and why it inspired copycat actions and acts of solidarity in as many as 1,000 cities. I can't think of another time in history when a relatively small group of people managed to touch a global nerve so quickly.

Occupy Wall Street was not even 30 days old when a global day of action showed how widely their message was resonating worldwide.

At the same time, police abuse of the demonstrators has both won sympathy for the protests and galvanized marches in protest. If the cops become the issue, there could be an escalation of tension and less of a focus on Wall Street and the economy

The NY Police know that, and have the capacity to deploy agent provocateurs to exacerbate confrontations. The cops are already using state of the art surveillance trucks to monitor the Park around the clock, a potentially dangerous intelligence operation that could lead to targeted crackdowns of people they consider "key troublemakers." The CIA reportedly has working relationship with the NYPD.

This 24 hour a day spying by special units is questionable from a Constitutional point of view but will continue unless and until a Court stops it.

Recent surveys in New York show that support by a 3-1 margin among the people. Even more say they have a right to protest and don't support heavy-handed police tactics. A national poll showed more support for Occupy Wall Street than the right-wing Tea Party.

Their own internet stream, websites, you tube videos tweets and messaging was initially targeted at their own activists, but others started paying attention when the mainstream media machine worldwide started tuning in and taking the movement seriously.

That, in turn, has an impact on the national and international conversation. Suddenly issues that had been ignored or downplayed were making news, and not just in the business press, Soon, labor unions and civic groups started checking it out and endorsing it.

There was momentum of a kind that makes other social movements jealous. Perhaps it was the absence of leaders and conventional protests. Perhaps it was the building of a community open to participation by all,

Something was working, and working well!

Some of the activists felt that their key challenge now is to build their movement as widely and deeply as possible, and not posture as a lobbying force with a laundry

list of demands they can't promote effectively.

Their movement orientation seems to drive politicians and media pundits crazy.

On Wall Street, insiders dismiss the protest as “unsophisticated” as if all their purportedly “sophisticated” strategies are working to promote economic recovery or create jobs. They are not.

That's why some of the Occupy activists think it would be a mistake now to ask a dysfunctional and broken system for anything. They don't think it is capable of redressing grievances that raise structural issues beyond the power of politicians to fix.

They also think that asking the system for anything validates the system.

At the same time, there are activists who want to see an organization emerge. There has been talk of a national convention in 2012 to bring together all the local occupy groups.

This seems to be at the talking stage, not the organizing phase.

The Democrats don't have a consistent stance towards the activists who are far more anarchistic and anti-system than they are. The Obama campaign is spending a lot of money to organize supporters but many in the movement fear co-optation. They are unlikely to take donations from political parties or well know political

party funders.

Decision on issues like this are made a participatory General Assembly that functions in a transparent and consensus based manner.

The Move On organization that backed Obama in 2008 and had raised millions for Democratic candidates was accused by some of trying to take over the movement, They just issued a statement denying that intent and say they want to be supportive but are not trying to speak for the grass roots based activists,

The Occupy Movement is raising money, a \$300,000 dollar figure was cited last week but their coffers are swelling thanks to donations of money and in kind contributions. The question now is how that money will be spent. (A financial scandal could lose political support!)

So far there is no paid staff, only dedicated volunteers.

The weather in New York is getting colder. The authorities hope that the coming of Winter-like conditions will drive them out of the Park. The activists respond by getting better sleeping bags and seeking nearby places to stay.

The conditions have never been easy. The Park they have occupied is all granite, with no grass or toilet facilities. The City does not allow tents or structures. The

Mayor still may be bent on shutting the encampment down.

So far, Occupy Wall Street has survived everything that authorities have thrown at them, but its hard to predicted what incidents might occur, or be instigated, to turn public opinion against them. That danger is real.

November 7, 2011

The question OWS hears most: “What’s your agenda?”

ONE OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY REPEATED, RECYCLED and dismissive questions about Occupy Wall Street is its supposed lack of an “agenda.”

The “what do you people want” question has featured in media interviews almost to the exclusion of all others.

It’s as if the movement won’t be taken seriously by some, unless and until, it enunciates a laundry list of “demands” and defines itself in a way that can allow others, especially a cynical media, to label, stereotype and pigeonhole it.

Many are just frothing at the mouth for some political positions they can expose as shallow or absurd. Teams of pundits are being primed to go on the attack once they have some bullet points to refute.

(Many police departments don’t need bullet points to go on the attack. They have been having a field day arresting occupiers in many cities, while collecting overtime and readying their own bullets as needed.)

Some on Wall Street already denounce these adversaries as “unsophisticated” for their formulation of the 99% versus the 1%. You’d expect the 1 % to reject this

way of seeing the world.

On the right, there is no factual inaccuracy or bizarre incident they won't invoke to dismiss a movement they seem to lack the mental tools to understand.

The Drudge Report was delighted to expose an incident involving public masturbation in one city. A group of gun nuts blasted away at a group of people who in their majority are deeply disappointed with President Obama's non-leadership on economic issues.

They write: "Don't be mistaken. The Wall Street protestors aren't peaceful hippies congregating about greed or social inequality. They are uniting to destroy America and everything we stand for. Their model is the "Arab Spring" which discharged their Governments in favor of anti-Israel agitators and Muslim fundamentalists. ... They are NOT about freedom, but about World domination and total control. And Obama is supporting them fully."

Hmm.

Others like Reverend Jesse Jackson want more engagement with legislative issues and even the backing of candidates. Democratic Candidates, even progressive ones like Elizabeth Warren, seem ambivalent about backing the occupations. Most are taking their cue from President Obama who only say he understands their "frustrations."

Some on the left, including friends of mine, seem

to suffer from undisguised vanguardism and want the Movement to raise the red flag right away, despite all the anarchists, libertarians and Democrats among them. Here's Bill Bowles writing from London:

“Although many on the established Left are claiming OWS as their own, latching on to the anti-capitalist theme that figures prominently, at least in some locations, it's clear that the focus of the OWS ‘movement’ varies greatly from place to place. Thus where it all started, in downtown Manhattan, the focus is very much on capitalist criminals rather than criminal capitalism. But little or no mention of the dreaded word- socialism, ironically for fear of alienating even those who occupy, never mind what the rabid corporate/state media does with that which shall remain nameless.”

These are old and, in many instances, predictable debates but what they miss is what's new and so vital about this decentralized, mostly leaderless movement that has captured the worlds imagination.

Judging by the media attention it has received and polls that show large numbers of supportive Americans, it is touching a global nerve and changing the national, even international conversation. It seems to be doing a lot that's right!

Not only have they survived mass arrests and continuing harassment, they showed they could brave what

Mother Nature threw their way. They are in the best tradition of the post office which still projects this creed despite the specter of cutbacks:”

“Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds”

Occupy’s “couriers” have self-appointed rounds in self managed occupations run by work groups and guided by participation in a daily General assembly where activists listen to each other and disagree without being disagreeable.

They have raised a war chest of several hundred thousand dollars. They keep their sites clean with their own sanitation department. In New York, they feed their own with their own kitchen that also serves homeless people in the neighborhood. They even have their own “people’s library.”

In many ways, they are creating ways of cooperative living that they want society to be like. The key to it all is commitment and engagement on the individual level. This way of fusing pragmatism and idealism is what makes it so impressive.

Movements that function from the top-down are more controlled but not necessarily more effective.

At this point, the Occupy movements are still growing, and still spreading an aura as much as a message.

When you think of how many unemployed people there are and how many others are coping with foreclosures or student debt you can see its potential for organizing and outreach.

Already activists in Oakland where attacks by police from 19 different jurisdictions have galvanized a mass reaction, are calling for November 2 “general strike.”

Are they well organized enough to pull this off and to shut down a whole city?

This may be a case of overreaching in reaction to a brutal police action. But, bear in mind that since it occurred, no one is cheering. The City’s Mayor says she now supports Occupy. The Police are now supposedly investigating their own conduct, and the occupiers are back in the plaza they were forced to abandon.

Three police attacks often boomerang with the public siding with citizens, not cops.

There is a lot to be optimistic about.

Slavoj Žižek writes in *In These Times*, “The Western Left has come full circle: After abandoning the so-called ‘class struggle essentialism’ for the plurality of anti-racist, feminist, gay rights etc., struggles, ‘capitalism’ is now re-emerging as the name of THE problem.”

Let’s put the emphasis on words like “emerging” and “awakening,” Politics is always a process. Give people time to distinguish their friends from their enemies.

Let's trust the wisdom of the people. They seem to "get it" much more than the media or the politicians."

It is significant that there has been talk of a National Convention in Philadelphia on July 4th next year.

Right now, as for a definitive agenda, action always speaks louder

November 9, 2011

Poems are the ultimate weapon of the 99%

Written as an Intro for the OWS Poetry Collection on display at the “People’s Library.”

YOU SEE IT HERE, DANGLING, IN THIS BOOK OF OCCUPY poems, stuffed between improvised covers in a binder, virtually chained to a bookcase in the most improbable People’s Library ever created.

It is a growing collection, tethered because so many read it, contribute to it and want it.

It is part of the amazing collection of the printed word, off the shelves of so many supporters and now sandwiched into a corner of a park housing an occupation to challenge the money state, based just two blocks away on the Street named after a Wall built centuries ago by slaves to hold back the Native Americans who were the first people displaced from this Island to make way for today’s overstuffed and over bonused courtiers of commerce.

Wall Street has long occupied America, but now, with passion and a high sense of purpose, Americans and friends from all over, occupy THEM, and among the non-violent weapons in an ever-expanding arsenal of anger

are words on the page, poems of every kind, written to tweak and challenge the power of their many purses.

All movements need their poets to set the tone, to raise deeper questions and express sensibility. And so it is true, I must confess of OWS, where poetry lives in the hearts of this encampment of the engage, this half-acre of enraged souls who have assembled here to take a stand, to fight the power, and to build a community of the dispossessed and discontented.

There may be rage in this Park but here is also love and commitment without end.

We are here also in the memory of poets who have come before, like Brooklyn's Walt Whitman whose poems and action echoed those who fought for the union to conquer slavery.

Whitman once said: "To have great poetry there must be great audiences, too," And Occupy Wall Street is a great audience with poetry readings every week among the mic checks and the militancy,

We are here in the spirit of Russia's Mikhail Lermontov whose *Death of the Poet* was a *J'accuse* after the death of the great Pushkin in which he addressed the inner circle, the 1% of that age, condemning, Wikipedia tells us, "Russian high society of complicity in Pushkin's death. Without mincing words, it portrays that society as a cabal of self-interested venomous wretches "hud-

dling about the throne in a greedy throng”, “the hangmen who kill liberty, genius, and glory” about to suffer the apocalyptic judgment of God.”

Oh, how that description rings true of those who labor as hostile neighbors to the righteous zeal at Zuccotti.

And, let’s not forget the beats like Allen Ginsberg who lived in Lower East Side New York, and whose life and work was a testament to the duty to provoke and inform, to fuse poesy and politics. Allen is here in spirit as are so many other New Yorkers who powered movements in years gone by.

And I think of a less well known lover of this city, my late mom, Ruth Lisa Schechter, who published nine books of poetry and staged readings to help the youngest victims of the Vietnam War.

The poetry in this book stirs us to think greater thoughts and pursue deeper visions. It is a part of the occupation but also transcends it.

Savor it all and praise the purveyors, praise those with a word of celebration and personal insight for what so many are struggling so hard to achieve.

They are occupying our souls, or trying to.

Read on. Write On. Fight On.

November 11, 2011

Inside the occupation: An international TV report

Script of a TV Report, Behind The Scenes of the Occupation for Press TV's "In Focus" Program. Produced and Directed by Danny Schechter of Globalvision

Title: *Danny Schechter, Filmmaker*

Intro: This it is, Occupy Wall Street, a half an acre in downtown Manhattan two blocks from the real center of financial power in the world.

Behind the scenes of Occupy Wall Street is an organization that is pretty invisible, it is decentralized, it is bottom up. It is organized into working committees. Yet it has created an infrastructure in direct democracy that we're going to show you in this INfocus report.

INfocus Opener/Music

Banjo music

Danny Schechter VO: Here's where we are, this is a map of lower Manhattan in New York's financial district.

"Mic Check! Mic Check!"

Danny Schechter VO: And this is Zuccotti Park, owned by a private realty company, and named after a real estate executive. It sits on a half acre of ground

that was damaged by the 9/11 attack on the nearby world trade center.

In the morning, activists asleep on cold granite, are waking up. Like hotel guests, these occupiers of Wall Street have their own concierge, a service they call “Comfort”.

Sparrow Kennedy: We provide them with fresh bedding, clean clothes, and toiletries.

Title: Sparrow Kennedy, Comfort Work Group

We pair people with community members so they can get a shower, sometimes get a good meal, nice, you know, rest.

Nobody gave us a roadmap to building a revolution so we are kind of making it up as we go along!

Danny VO: How did all this happen? Cyber activist and writer David Degraw helped shape its message.

Title: David Degraw, Author and Activist

Two years ago I wrote a book called The Economic Elite vs. The People of The United States. And in the book I was calling for 99% of the population to unite in common ground saying that both political parties, both Democrats and Republicans have been bought

off by global financial interests through a system of political bribery, which is campaign finance, lobbying and the revolving door.

And I felt that whether you were a Democrat, Republican, Progressive, Libertarian, an Independent, an Anarchist, a Communist, no matter what, there was common ground that we could come together on.

Danny Schechter VO: The crowds that pack the encampment now known as Occupy Wall Street has become a community with a map of its own. A map of how the park has been turned into its own village run by what they call work groups.

What you are seeing here is a religious service. This is Sunday, and various ministers, and congregations, and in the past Muslims have come to this park to show solidarity with the people here. What I was curious about was how this was organized? How did they manage to sustain so much interest and get so much attention? And that's what we've come to investigate.

Title: Jean Ross, Co-President, National Nurses United

It's become a little community here. And you know these are the kinds of things you hope would happen in an environment like this. You don't usually see it until after some sort of a natural disaster, well this I

call an unnatural disaster, what spurred it. And people are doing just what you hoped they would do. Americans are very attuned to caring about each other. We have to!

Mic Check! Mic Check!

Danny Schechter VO: This is the decision making body of Occupy Wall Street. A daily exercise in direct, bottom up democracy in which all of the people here vote on and discuss key issues.

Casey Denning: This sort of, what we call a horizontal approach to democracy was developed as a way to allow everyone in a movement to have a voice so that it wasn't dominated by one or two leaders.

Announcement at General Assembly (all lines repeated by group)

This morning

Occupy Oakland was attacked

By hundreds of riot police

Danny Schechter VO: The General Assembly or GA as it is known meets every night using the human mic technique because city authorities will not allow amplified sound.

Ideas and information are repeated so everyone can hear them.

GA Announcement: We will not accept this police brutality.”

Danny Schechter VO: They have their own way of expressing their opinions.

The General Assembly is the legislative arm of the movement. The administration is self- managed by workgroups, as Justin Diaz of Info and Outreach explains.

Justin Diaz, Info And Outreach Work Group:

This is just a continuation of the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring gave basically tools of social media and technology to people who hadn't used them before. Our model it's not about promotion, its about attraction. And we are building trust with the community by being here day by day and providing quantifiable benefit to people. Homeless are getting fed. Crazy people are being attended to they have a place they can sit and not have to be overwhelmed by the voices in their head they can sit and blend into a crowd and not be harassed by the police.

Danny Schechter VO: This Group keeps a calendar of what's going on every day.

The people in the park are fed all day long by their own volunteer kitchen which includes some gourmet chefs who cook in nearby homes.

Sean Dolan, The Kitchen: We are feeding on an average of, I've heard numbers anywhere from 3 to 5,000 a day. And we usually have lines that go all

the way around and come back up here. But everyone gets fed, and we keep going until we run out of food.

This is our serving line, over here is our prep area in the center and on the far side is our utility section which includes our dishwashing section and the storage of all our utility items.

The reason I am here is for the young people because I don't see a very good future for them right now, and that worries me. And in order for me to help secure a better future for our young people, I'm here and I'm feeding them.

We serve everybody. We are not going to turn anybody away. We have homeless come through here, but you know what? A lot of the people who are here are homeless. There's a lot of people. I work with several people in here who are homeless. And they are so inspired to be able to do this and at the same time we provide them with purpose, a place to stay, and food.

Danny Schechter VO: Feeding minds is as important as feeding bodies. Even as the area's nearby bookstore was closed because of the economy, Occupy Wall street opened its own people's library with a place to read and borrow donated books, or take them, for free!

William Scott, People's Library: The library was formed in a very informal way right from the begin-

ning of occupy wall street. And it was made up originally by kind of a pile of books that were on a tarp. And one of the librarians who works here, who is also a professional librarian, she organized these books into the form of the people's library. And the collection has grown and grown. It all grows through donations. And we currently have somewhere between 2 and 3,000 books.

This is our reference section, people are free to read these things but we just ask that they stay here. They can be literally sometimes reference books like this dictionary, but also, things that are particularly relevant to OWS, to the movement, to grassroots democratic movements and that kind of thing, say, Howard Zinn books, Noam Chomsky books, that kind of thing.

Gene Shaw: And they are free. And a lot of people wouldn't have access to them because a lot of libraries don't carry them anymore. Or, ever.

William Scott: A lot of people who are staying in the park or who are coming down here to join the protest, are the victims of, or are suffering from enormous amounts of debt, student loan debt, to pay for the cost of tuition, to buy books for college. Ah, there are high school students here who don't have books in their classrooms. And so what we are trying to do

is directly kind of embody a kind of alternative to that type of educational system.

Danny Schechter VO: The folks here are reading about the history of social movements in America. Deborah Martin notes that the Wall Street area is rich in its own history, a history of slavery.

Deborah Martin: They saw us as commodities, then, they see us as commodities now. And this is worldwide.

When we look at the area where the stock exchange stands now, day labor from those who were indentured servants from Europe, a lot from Germany and other, a lot from England, a lot from Ireland were sold, their labor was sold there. Indonesians, Lenape Indians as well as Africans who were indentured servants coming from New Netherlands.

Danny: So this is the center of Colonialism, Imperialism even...?

Deborah: Yes, that's why I was beginning to say we need to de-colonize Wall Street because the first exchange, stock sold on the exchange were slaves.

Sean Dolan: We are a non-violent movement. And this is what I cannot stress more, non-violent, peaceful. And that's what we want.

Danny VO: Keeping the park clean is a big challenge. With many people coming through and sleeping here.

So they have their own sanitation department

Lauren Digioia: Sanitation is also an offshoot of a basic human need and that's personal hygiene and being able to fight off bacteria and infection. We not only pick up trash we help collect it.

We are also a fully functioning recycling program. We recycle bottles, cans, cardboard, paper. Garbage we take to the curbs and the city handles it from there.

We all actually live in here. This is our bedroom in here. And we kind of use the walls and our supplies and our bins with our personal things, as our walls.

I consider us one of the basic necessities of the movement. And we come under fire all the time because it is really the only place where someone can say, hey, that's a reason to evict them, they are dirty. The park is unsanitary, the park is unclean, they are vandalizing, they are ruining the trees, you know, so we have to fight back!

Danny Schechter VO: These workgroups are constantly meeting in an effort to coordinate their activities. There are many facilitators who try to improve communications.

Some of these groups are increasingly meeting off-site, in a public atrium on Wall Street, or in a churchyard just up the street.

Garrick Beck, Occupy Activist: They have picked

up seeds that have been planted over the last 40 years. Seeds planted from the civil rights movement, the peace action movements, the affinity group movements of the no nukes movement. The alternative energy movement, all of these movements and many more, the feminist movement and so on, equal justice, equal rights movements, these seeds have been planted 10, 15, 20 years ago. And these young people have been wandering in the garden, picked up these seeds, and at this moment, the downpour has happened, and these seeds are sprouting, right here on Wall Street.

Danny Schechter VO: While many debates go on all day and all night, there are people with many views here: Democrats, libertarians, socialists and anarchists, and they listen to each other.

Sean Dolan: I've seen people argue left and right, and then hug. So there is a good coming together of different ideas and different philosophies.

Drumming.

There is also a time for music and art including drum circles and visiting performers.

Reverend Billy: Take your money! Take your Money out of the bank!

Danny VO: Meet Reverend Billy. Who plays a preacher in a church of Stop Shopping.

“Reverend Billy,” Activist and Artist: I hope nobody here has your money in B of A anymore. Bank of America finances mountaintop removal, finances tar sands, finances hydro-fracking, and puts co-2 emissions into the air. Get your money out of B of A! Amen, Praise be!

Danny Schechter VO: On the serious side, economists and speakers are constantly giving lectures, and teach-ins. Here is William Black, a former federal regulator who believes that financiers who commit fraud should be prosecuted and jailed.

Title: William Black, Lawyer and Criminologist

Ok, some good news (all lines are repeated)
 You can put the banksters in prison
 We put over 1,000 in the Savings and Loan crisis
 Here's how we did it.
 The agency, the regulators
 Made over 10,000
 Criminal referrals
 And created a priority
 Of the worst 100 banks
 That led
 To the greatest success
 In prosecution

Of elite white collar criminals
In history.

Danny Schechter VO: This movement has grown dramatically, especially after waves of arrest by police who surround the park, spy on it, but have yet to invade it.

New Yorkers have spoken out in many surveys expressing support for the right to protest and against police abuse. Inside the park, protesters have their own approach to security.

There are two security problems. One is with the police. The other is with people in the camp who are disrupting the movement.

Activist: There's a lot of media outlets that are trying to frame the narrative as, this destructive element in our camp IS the movement. And I want people to realize that it is not the movement.

Olivia Chitayat, Occupy Activist: We have the medics team, the mediation team, security, people who work around mental illness, we have all these people here, they are working together to address issues about people in this camp that cause disruptions

Brendan, Security Workgroup: It's about calm down yourself first, and then, approach the person

with respect and validation and make them feel that they are part of the answer. As opposed to part of the problem.

So what I do is I try to is separate them from the situation by showing them respect, support and love, and then I bring them out to the sidewalk, or bring them off site, calm them down, and then we all get together again.

Olivia: When I first got here a group of women started talking about creating a safe space that is very clearly designated for people who come to occupy and want to sleep here.

Brendan: I hear all parties involved, I try to use the community to get eyes on the situation, have a consensus form that's organic, and have everybody rally to support the distressed person.

Danny Schechter VO: If there are medical needs, there is also a special tent staffed by doctors and nurses around the clock.

Jean Ross, Co-President National Nurses United: "I'm Jean Ross, and I'm one of three Presidents for National Nurses United. And we are out here we've set up first aid stations at all of the occupy sites, most of them. And this one first. So if you want to come in. These are all help-yourself. So we've got pills and things out there that people can come and take.

This is Zephyr, he's a certified therapy dog. We are treating someone here who had his shoes stolen. A pair of shoes that we got him that he'd never had before.

This is a board here where we put down the volunteers. It is very early in the day, you'll see more people there later. And all of these supplies here have been donated.

Doctors come in and volunteer their time. You got a lot of hypothermia cases, there's a lot of people with mental health problems that have come out from the community that come back every day. There are people here who haven't had medical care in literally years.

Well that's the dichotomy of what's happening in this country. You have the haves and the have nots. And the have nots are very, very, very ill. If its not mentally ill, they can't take care of themselves and they know they should because they don't have insurance, they don't have money, they don't have jobs. So we are just seeing a little microcosm of what's going on in this country.

Danny Schechter: The Occupy Wall Street movement spreads its message and concerns through its own media, they have their own newspaper, the

Occupy Wall Street Journal. They also have social media, on twitter, Tumblr and Facebook, with their own live stream where anyone can say anything!

There is a workgroup setup to serve the world press that has inundated the park.

The occupy press team has lots of experience in handling media requests.

Title: Bill Buster, Press Workgroup

First of all, most of the press was extremely dismissive of not just the movement but they were getting on a very personal level, very insulting, and they've tended to stay close to that level, a lot of news outlets, even at this point, even though we are the #1 story in the world and the international press gives us far more credibility than our own media here, its really kind of shocking and very disappointing.

Bill Dobbs, Press Workgroup: There's so much. If you do a Google news search it is in the tens of thousands of hits in a 24 hour period many, many stories come out. My general sense is that the quantity and quality of coverage built over time.

Bill Buster: One of Rupert Murdoch's people came in and their lead story was how filthy and dirty this was, and how it was a wall mart for rats and blah

blah blah, and it was like, completely mischaracterizing everything and everybody here. And my job is to combat that.

Drumming

Danny Schechter VO: All of these working groups support the occupation but protest is its main product. Protest in the form of individual signs on the sidewalk and marches in the street.

Amazingly, this occupation has so far inspired a global movement of solidarity, with occupations in more than 1,000 cities.

This movement is not only inspiring other movements, but generating donations.

By mid-October they had \$483,000 in the bank.

Pete, is in the finance committee.

Pete Dutrow, Finance Workgroup: We were kind of lucky that before it got too big we kind of set some processes in place, on how to collect receipts, how to disburse money, and that has kind of really saved us.

One of the things about our group is that we really, whenever we are handling money or doing any kind of transaction, there's more than one member present. And we've also had some of the other groups with us when we do that so they can see our processes, and kind of get out how we do things.

I really didn't want to join this working group but

I saw what a mess this could become, and how bad that could be for us as a movement, so I kind of felt morally obligated to join this working group because I have had a lot of experience with organizing other business and their business processes, and how they account for things, and how they disburse things. So I was kind of a natural fit for this even though I didn't want to do this, and I was reluctant. We are here to help make this a sustainable movement that we can move forward, and you know, actually keep it going.

Jean Ross: The movement is going to go on. Just like the movement in the 60's for civil rights, just like the anti-war movement, this is not going to end. It can't, because we can't survive this way

Banjo Music

Comments by activists: This is the most creative group of people I've ever been around in my life, and I've been around a lot of creative people.

Sign: "I'm not a protester I am an agent of change"

Activist: "Definitely has awakened my political consciousness to a new level."

Sign: "Stop the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and bring out troops home now."

Activist: "I think America, let me re-phrase that, I

think the world is due for some change. Just like how the seasons go from winter to summer, I think we've reached the peak in the current economy, the current social, ah, norms."

Sign: "Dissent is patriotic"

Activist: "I don't know what success looks like because I don't know what the answers are, and part of what we are doing here is figuring out what those answers are, and figuring out what success would look like.:

Sign: "Workers rights are human rights"

Activist: "It's also deeply satisfying to finally see people trying to make a kind of intelligent economic analysis, social analysis, political analysis about what's going on."

Sign: "How about a maximum wage"

Activist: "We want the government, the politicians, the CEOs, the bankers to be held accountable to what has happened to this country, and what they've done."

Sign: "Stop the cuts to people with disabilities."
"Real Jobs! And Tax G.E."

Activist: "It is a very hopeful experience for me, being a mom of a 5 year old, and you see people of all ages and children too coming here."

Activist: The fact is, the corporate structure, the

governments and the banks have not been able to provide for human needs. And they are not going to be able to, because they are too involved with their own greed. What I'm hoping here is that a new world culture evolves.

Activist: "This is like a tsunami wave that's been spreading and washing all over the globe"

Bill Dobbs: I could never have imagined that this would take off the way it has. Everybody knows there's something wrong, but this has now given an outlet and a voice such that when the Newark star ledger about 10 days into the protest said the nation should listen to the small encampment in liberty square, or the new York times maybe a week later said, we know what they are talking about, don't be concerned with this criticism, they don't have a message, we know what they are saying. That's pretty remarkable stuff.

David Degraw: No one's going to defend your interests. That's what we've learned. In the absence of a government that will defend our interests we have to take it upon ourselves to get out here in the streets and defend our interests.

Danny Schechter: The occupation continues. How much longer can it continue? We don't know with the cold weather coming in and the mayor threatening to close the park down again. But even if it is closed

down, a certain experience has been shared by all the people here. A commitment to change in America, a commitment to more economic fairness and equality and that's a commitment that's spread across America, and across the world.

So even if Occupy Wall Street ends tomorrow, it will have succeeded beyond its wildest dreams to actually not only raise certain demands, but also to show people that it is possible for like minded people to find a way to live together in a democratic fashion to help each other, and continue their struggle for change.

I'm Danny Schechter for INfocus.

Video Team:

Danny Schechter

Randy Cecchine

Will Lepczyk

Amy Schneider

You can watch this TV report at

<http://www.presstv.ir/Program/208834.html>

November 17, 2011

Where will the next phase of Occupy Wall Street take us?

A WEEK AGO, I PRODUCED A TV DOCUMENTARY ON inside the Occupy Wall Street encampment in New York. It was already somewhat obsolete by the time it aired.

The Park, once a buzzing center of debate and open-air meetings has gone residential in the sense that virtually every square inch of what was a half-acre political terrarium is now dominated by tents, an effort to insure more protection from the elements and some better level of personal security. As private spaces proliferated, public space shrunk.

Now, public health officials are raising the prospect of the spread of germs while violent incidents in other cities have police nationwide threatening to shut down the occupations in the name, of course, of preserving public safety.

The first happened in Oakland, a town with a long history of police violence that was on display when cops overran the camp, seriously hurting an Iraq veteran, and triggering a call for a General Strike. Now the gendarmerie in every city are hoping to shut it all down.

The Digital Journal Reports:

“Police warned that the camp was illegal and that protesters face arrest if they did not break up the camp. Police have lately been complaining about the presence of the camp, saying it was drawing needed personnel from policing crime in the city. An open letter the Oakland Police Officer’s Association issued after the shooting, said:

“With last night’s homicide, in broad daylight, in the middle of rush hour, Frank Ogawa Plaza is no longer safe ... Please leave peacefully, with your heads held high, so we can get police officers back to work fighting crime in Oakland neighborhoods.”

There followed two more tragic events that Occupy organizers deny they had anything to do with:

“On the same day the Oakland shooting occurred, a military veteran from Chittenden County committed suicide by shooting himself in the head. The incident occurred in an Occupy tent in City Hall Park, Burlington, Vermont....’

A similar tragic event occurred at the Salt Lake City Occupy encampment on Friday. A man was found dead in his tent. Police suspect he died from a combination of drug use and carbon monoxide.”

These incidents are being blamed on the occupations and may become the pretext for another effort to crush the movement. That could lead to bloody con-

frontations that the movement may not be able to win. Already, police are infiltrating Occupy camps.

At the same time, Occupy Wall Street may be facing a fork in the road as the protest movement wrestles with how to become a more effective political force.

The tension between achieving reforms through protests and promoting a deeper revolution is evident in intense debates and discussions that take place outside the park in churches and at a atrium at 60 Wall Street, a public space next to the Deutsche Bank building,

So at various points in the days, bankers leaving their offices unknowingly walk by intense circles of people in far funkier and more practical clothing huddled into circles to discuss strategies and tactics in work groups operating on principles of open discussion in an effort to find consensus.

Some activists are critical of too much internal discourse and not enough external outreach, especially to the communities hardest hit by the economic crisis. There are many meetings about coordination, facilitation and a 'spokescouncil' that could supplant their open-to-all General Assembly,

Many are aware that the movement's current base may not be more than 1% of the 99% they march in the name of. Maybe even less. They know that their chances of securing the changes they want are tied to

creating campaigns and organizing strategies that are less counter-cultural and more political, campaigns that can mobilize workers, communities of color and campuses struggling under the weight of student debt and bleak futures in the job market. This takes toning down some of the rhetoric and counter cultural political style that drives the movement.

Can this movement go beyond using the digital technologies that appeal to the young and the hip, and, also, shape a communications campaign to mainstream America, with ads in newspapers and PSAs and even political infomercials on Cable TV. This will be needed if the movement is to penetrate deeper into small towns, the suburbs and the “fly over” regions of Middle America.

Can it build organizations that people can join – and identify with?

At the moment, these “leaderless” activists see this approach as more manipulative than participatory but how else can they convince people unlike themselves – people without histories of radical political activism or union militancy to feel comfortable in a youth dominated harder-edge movement with its unique mix of direct activism and small “d” democratic idealism?

Occupy is very strong when it comes to creative tactics, but what is the longer-term strategy? How will it

have a change to shape and implement one?

I picked up a copy of scholar Gene Sharp's how to make a non-violent revolution manual called "From Dictatorship To Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation" at the People's Library in Zuccotti Park. Now published in 34 languages, it offers a detailed primer on how people's movements can topple tyrannies. It itemizes the ideas and techniques that powered movements in many countries including Egypt, Tunisia and Serbia.

You can get it online from Gene Sharp's Albert Einstein Institution at <http://www.aeinstein.org>

The Serbian movement OPTOR that helped overthrow the Milosevic regime with protests in Belgrade have since become specialists in training activists and orchestrating uprisings. They have advised movements in Egypt, and some of their key people have had conversations and perhaps more interaction with Occupy Wall Street. (The General Assembly of Occupy voted to send one of its activists to Egypt.)

They do have a lot to teach using print, video and video games. Their work has raised eyebrows and led to suspicion, and even conspiracy mongering with "revelations" that their actions, which have included aiding the "Color Revolutions" in Ukraine and Eastern Europe are funded or directed by the CIA.

As a veteran CIA investigator, I am not persuaded by the “evidence” since Washington more often resembles “the gang that can’t shoot straight” than effective non violent change-makers. Their dismal failures outnumber their few successes (which doesn’t mean they don’t cause harm or negatively affect political outcomes.)

There is a British-made film, *The Revolution Business* (Journeyman Pictures), with an unmistakable anti-American orientation that stirs fears of devious covert scenarios all made in the USA.

Be mindful that all movements for social change have their own internal contradictions and rivalries, and that when movements develop traction, many forces want to use and manipulate them, including governments, and groups with every point of view. Most don’t succeed. You have to be careful about connecting dots that may seem to connect but in reality don’t. As Freud said years ago, sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.

The question is: can Occupy Wall Street, with all its dynamism and commitment find ways to sustain itself and gain new momentum? I am betting that they will – but movements can move on more than one track at the same time without compromising their integrity. There is so much to do and so many people with whom to win over and engage.

November 15, 2011

Police evict Occupy Wall Street with their own occupation

BLOOMBERG NEWS WAS STANDING BY AS ITS FOUNDER Mayor Michael Bloomberg ordered his cossacks in riot gear to “cleanse” Zuccotti Park in the middle of the morning to replace one group of occupiers with another.

No doubt emboldened by earlier evictions in Oakland and Portland, and with Sound Weapons emitting noise to disorient protesters and add to the chaos, his office was saying, “protesters can return after the park is cleared,”

Until this point, the Mayor had gone back and forth with threats to clear the Park in the name of preserving public safety of course and upholding the wishes of the huge Brookfield Realty group which owns the “public” park and on whose board his live-in girlfriend sits.

For weeks, the Murdoch press had been baiting him as weak and a wus for not getting tough as they focused on any act of depravity they could find or invent But now, the park is gone – for now – but the Movement says it will go on,

As the cops and the Sanitation Department dismantled tents and occupied the area, keeping pedestrians out, the OWS media team was issuing a statement that

began, “You can’t evict an idea whose time has come,” they said.

“This burgeoning movement is more than a protest, more than an occupation, and more than any tactic. The “us” in the movement is far broader than those who are able to participate in physical occupation. The movement is everyone who sends supplies, everyone who talks to their friends and families about the underlying issues, everyone who takes some form of action to get involved in this civic process.

Such a movement cannot be evicted. Some politicians may physically remove us from public spaces – our spaces – and, physically, they may succeed. But we are engaged in a battle over ideas. Our idea is that our political structures should serve us, the people – all of us, not just those who have amassed great wealth and power. We believe that is a highly popular idea, and that is why so many people have come so quickly to identify with Occupy Wall Street and the 99% movement.”

The New York Mayor acted after authorities in Oakland, California and Portland Oregon evicted occupation activists from camps there. In both cities, activists have seized new parks and areas to use as launching pads for more protests.

In New York, the New York Times was reporting, “The protesters resisted with chants of “Whose park? Our

park!” as the police began moving in and tearing down tents. The protesters rallied around an area known as “the kitchen” and began building barricades with tables and pieces of wood.

Officers told the demonstrators that the city had “determined that the continued occupation of Zuccotti Park poses an increasing health and fire safety hazard.”

Demonstrators had been cleaning the park, and cooperating with the Fire Department. Most felt this concern was a pretext to justify an eviction of the kind that has now occurred.

Polar Levine, a local resident and musician, who lives in the neighborhood, and worked with me on my film “Plunder”, about Wall Street crime, walked to the Park but was turned away and shared his experience in a rushed mid-morning account:

“The cops blocked off access to the park. They humiliated themselves. Pathetic! Pushing people back and back. I ask what is this about as was told by a number of cops – apparently this was the talking point – that we’re blocking pedestrians.

“I pointed out that this is my neighborhood and I know that the only pedestrians to be found are us. Everything is closed. It’s 2am. No workers, no shoppers. Why insult me with bullshit? Why not just say we were told not to let you see what’s we’re doing a couple blocks south.

“I’d understand. But I won’t be told to go home for no good reason.

“I was talking to them the whole time non-stop; very slowly and calmly. Interesting, they would listen. A few broke rank enough to respond at moments of calm and then get violent and stupid,” I said. “You can see I’m speaking to you with respect. I know you go home to some of the worst-hit neighborhoods – foreclosures, etc. You’re union guys. We consider you to be allies. Please think later tonight about what you were doing.

“I’m in front with a very large cop’s hand pushing on my neck then sticking his bat in my gut. All about nothing. No property being even spat at, no violence. A pretty dumb spectacle. A hard place for them to be – they’re on the job following orders from above. No way to know to what degree they’re conscious of why they’re doing what they’re doing aside from the on-the-job-following-orders rationale.

“I told them we understand you’re working a job, probably supporting families. But later on – think about it on the way home. People are being banged up, arrested. I say, in a tone that resembled a concerned friend – if your kids ask you why you’re doing this to people with absolutely no pretext, what do you say? Your faces are being broadcast all over the web right now and will be all day tomorrow. You’ll see yourself on the side of

creating a riot about nothing.”

What now?

It’s still early morning in New York, and there’s a call for an assembly at Foley Square, a park that fronts on New York Courts. Reports on internal divisions within the movement have given way to a united response to the police action undertaken in what’s always been thought of as a “liberal city” presided over by a liberal mayor.

Polls in New York Papers had shown support for Occupy Wall Street by a 3-1 margin with even more New Yorkers backing their right to protest. It was police arrests of protesters that turned public opinion in their favor in the first place.

Until this point, the Fox News media assault on the occupy movement had not really changed public opinion. But none of that may matter now, as the movement and the city face a new situation.

Occupy Wall Street, as a movement, is hardly spent or dependent on access to one park.

This is an issue that the government is taking seriously too amid reports that young people are turning way from and against President Obama.

There’s nothing like police overreaction to harden attitudes. The rousting of the Park will lead to more conflict and polarization; you can count on it.

November 16, 2011

The police may have seized the park but the movement moves on

IT WAS STRANGE, AFTER ALL THESE WEEKS, TO BE ON THE outside looking in at a new set of occupiers that were there because they have the guns and we don't. The movement does not.

The recent attacks on Occupy encampments may have their origins in decisions by federal agencies. It has been reported that the Mayor of Oakland admitted that 16 cities consulted with the Department of Homeland Security.

Liberty Square/Zuccotti Park had now been power cleaned and was pristine. More than 200 occupiers had been arrested in the takeover that included teargas and selective physical violence against resisters.

Soon, all the tents were gone: Medical, Media, The Kitchen and The Library, as well as all the work group locations that I showed in my film a week earlier. Now there were cops in command, barricades on the outside and contractors employed by Brookfield Properties, the Park's owner, on the inside.

Activists with badges calling themselves the "99%" were soon watching the triumph of authority with pains in their hearts from behind the barricades while a dozen TV trucks set up their antennas to broadcast live on this

latest confrontation,

The tabloid media were gloating earlier in the day, “BEAT IT” was the headline in the Daily News. Rupert; Murdoch’s NY Post had been tipped in advance and covered the expulsion like a cheerleader, although reported on police violence.

Earlier in the day, a liberal judge had temporarily ordered the Police to allow the protesters to return to the Park with their stuff, but the case went back to State Court. The cops ignored the ruling and by late afternoon had a new one that exonerated their eviction.

CBS reported, “A New York judge has upheld the city’s dismantling of the Occupy Wall Street encampment, saying that the protesters’ first amendment rights don’t entitle them to camp out indefinitely in the plaza.

“State judge Michael Stallman (a liberal who had worked for a liberal City Council member) on Tuesday denied a motion by the demonstrators seeking to be allowed back into the park with their tents and sleeping bags.

“CBS News legal analyst Andrew Cohen reports that the key paragraph in the judge’s ruling is as follows: “Here, movements have not demonstrated that the rules adopted by the owners of the property, concededly after the demonstrations began, are not reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions permitted under the First Amendment.”

“Time, place and manner” restrictions on speech like the demonstrators had petitioned against have a long history in American law, going back at least to the 1960s. It is unlikely that this ruling will be overturned on appeal, if it is appealed at all.

“At the end of the day, if this movement is only tied to Liberty Plaza, we are going to lose. We’re going to lose,” said Sandra Nurse, one of the organizers, referring to another name for the park. “Right now the most important thing is coming together as a body and just reaffirm why we’re here in the first place.”

The predictable verdict by a politically connected Judge reminded me of an old joke that Lenny Bruce often told, “In the halls of Justice, the only justice is in the Halls.”

The Post reported, “With tensions simmering all day, demonstrators had spent hours surrounding the now-closed park near Wall Street as they waited for the judge’s decision. Hours after the city forcibly evicted protesters, scrubbed down the park and closed it, Occupy Wall Street protests scattered across downtown Manhattan.”

Earlier in the day, protesters thought they had a new space to occupy, a mile away at 6th Avenue and Canal Street on a property owned by Trinity Church, a venerable religious institution with vast holdings in Downtown Manhattan. They called for a new mobilization at the site, an unused playground that is now a construction site.

Hundreds showed up with banners but so did the police in riot gear. Soon a “White Shirt” commander named Esposito arrived to take command. He ordered the occupiers off the site. Apparently someone else at Trinity had reneged on the earlier invite. (In early December, Occupiers staged a hunger strike against Trinity to press them to reverse their decision.)

Some of the protesters left but at least 16 were swiftly arrested with one set of cops telling us to get off the sidewalks and others to get on them. Some journalists were also taken into custody. One woman in a wheel chair was let go.

Most of the demonstrators left the site and headed back to the Park that, later, let some back in after searching them. They are being told they cannot sleep there.

Clearly there is a new challenge here – to build the movement without a physical base. Two New York churches are now offering out of town demonstrators’ places to stay and others will no doubt extend hospitality. (I’m told the churches are charging, not providing free space.) Other sites may be found, but their “liberated zone” has been lost for now.

Richard Trumka, the head of the AFL-CIO issued a statement calling for more protests on November 17th when some activists vow to shut Wall Street down.

His statement seemed unusually militant: “They can take away the tarps and the tents. But they can’t slow down the Occupy Wall Street movement. The 99% is undaunted. Occupy Wall Street’s message has already created a new day. This movement has created a seismic shift in our national debate – from austerity and cuts to jobs, inequality and our broken economic system.”

So, clearly, despite the loss of the Park, this movement will move on. The question remains: where is it moving – and how can bring the large number of Americans who support it along?

When the police were doing their thing, no doubt, only following orders, demonstrators chanted, “This is What Democracy Looks Like” and “No Riot here, take off your riot gear.”

(Update: December 10: The Judge who blocked a temporary restraining order has since ordered a hearing on the underlying issues which could lead to a reopening of the park to occupiers. The Movement is making a second bid to take over a Trinity Church owned vacant lot, and has initiated a hunger strike against the Church mobilizing many religious groups and personalities to support them)

November 17, 2007

Is it time to occupy the world?

AMERICANS ARE KNOWN FOR GRANDIOSE NOTIONS AS IN the song *We Are The World*. Its producer Quincy Jones is on his way to Dubai to help create an updated version for the Arab world, but even as the ‘we are all one’ rhetoric escalates, real world problems continue to get in the way.

The hopes for world unity are confronted daily by the forces of global fragmentation and polarization, what insiders call “contagion.”

On the virtual world of the Internet, there are more and more calls for general strikes as if they can be organized with one email. Manifestos soar to new rhetorical heights with demands for a worldwide occupation like this one:

“We declare that we have no division among us, the people united. We are united as humanity and nature, one whole planet. We are ONE and we are here for ALL, including the one per cent!

We declare that we need to take over the world agenda, to shape our future together, in a bottom-up, horizontal and egalitarian way! Let’s make real democracy a reality and put an end to the ‘ancient regime’ of the elite.”

Ok, sounds inspiring, if a tad naive, but getting from where we are to where some of today's more visionary netizens want to take us will be formidable.

Just 20-plus Occupy Wall Streeters are off on a long march to Washington from New York City to give the Congressional Super Committee a piece of their mind.

These tactics get attention, but where's the strategy?

Occupy encampments are up against local police power nationwide as officials arrest more activists and try to shut the movement down. New York's Mayor Bloomberg, who last week exaggerated the threat the encampment off Wall Street poses, is now minimizing its influence. In just a few weeks it's gone, in his estimation, from a big deal to no deal.

The marches are continuing, as is the media coverage, even as the cold weather threatens and, for some, the novelty wears off.

Depressing as it may be, there is talk again of a global depression, and a "lost decade", in the words of Christine Lagarde, who heads the IMF. (The former head of that august body, Mr. Strauss-Kahn is still nursing his self-inflicted wounds, a poster boy for the immorality and corruption on all levels in high places.)

Europe seems to be blowing up. As the economic crisis gets worse, a social and political crisis is sure to follow. Look for more volatility on all fronts.

First, Greece, then Italy and now Spain are, as we say, in “deep doo doo”.

France was forced to announce more austerity measures (Including canceling its latest round of military spending) with many economists warning that austerity is precisely the wrong way to go because it actually raises unemployment.

Many of Europe’s politicians seemed joined at the hip with bankers, and locked into a simplistic and elitist approach to economic renewal that doesn’t let many facts get in the way of draconian cutbacks.

Cutting expenditures and the social safety net will raise the people against them, Austerity today, social rebellion tomorrow! The irrational is once again trumping the rational with our problems increasingly seeming more psychiatric in origin than political. Panics always foster delusions and self-defeating scenarios.

The public is losing faith as the reputations of once great financial firms sharply decline along with faith in politicians. A left-leaning leader is going in Greece; a rightist fixture of the “Bunga Bunga” Italy has been forced out.

Whose head will be chopped next by the bondholders? The Euro zone seems to be zoning out.

And, here in America, only 8 – 9 per cent of the public say they have confidence in Congress, and it’s not clear

why these pols even enjoy that record low in support. The president's popularity is way down but so is public support for Republicans.

Only the mass media keeps the democratic illusion alive, between commercials, of course.

Banks are begging customers not to take their money out, even as Occupy Wall Street encourages supporters to shift funds from big financial institutions to smaller credit unions. More than \$650,000 in deposits was reportedly withdrawn in one "Move Your Money" day of protest.

Objectively, this is a time when a new force can shake up politics, but is OWS, as presently constituted, that force?

Democrats won recent off-year elections on important issues like collective bargaining and abortion. But the US media prefers to dwell on the sensational rather than the analytical with more pandering coverage of GOP candidate Herman Cain's alleged sexual peccadilloes years ago than the deepening crises that confront us today.

The challenge OWS faces is how to grow from a protest movement into a political force. That will be difficult because its social base is as, if not even more, alienated from conventional politics than everyone else.

Its leaderless style, anarchistic instincts and radical

impulses do not offer a sensibility that politicians feel comfortable with. They find it threatening to their pro-corporate and compromise-oriented political style.

Fears of co-optation in the movement are widespread, and so alliances are problematic. They are less consumed with market sell-offs than political sell-outs by leaders they once respected.

The movement is better at using the regular and social media, their own and the corporate press, to discuss what they are doing than what they want and how people can join them.

If OWS is to be more than a passing phenomenon, it needs to craft a new and bold pro-active (as opposed to a reactive) media strategy to reach out to the millions of disaffected Americans hard hit by the economic crisis. A few infomercials and ads might help. How else can they reach and organize the sympathy that is out there? Putting one's a – on the line is not the same as moving masses.

OWS also needs to find a way to mobilize other institutions to disinvest from banks known for fraudulent practices, and demand that CEOs who committed crimes be jailed. Such a “jailout” would make economic justice more of a reality than more bailouts. The judicial system seems as corrupt as the financial one.

The fact that this movement is still moving is impres-

sive, but real questions remain about where it is moving – and how it will get there. Wall Street already occupies the world. Can OWS dislodge it?

Press release from the Occupy web site:

N17; Day of Global Action (From OccupyWallStreet.org)

Two days after the closing of their park by police, the activists of Occupy Wall Street struck back with their boldest action to date: an attempt to shut down the NY Stock Exchange.

This is an example of how the Occupy movement's own media covered a protest using social media and live video streams:

“Thousands marched on Wall Street this morning, blockading all entry points to the New York Stock Exchange. ‘People’s mics’ have been breaking out at barricades, with participants sharing stories of struggling in an unfair economy.

“I paid taxes and took care of my responsibility, and I’m struggling,” said participant, Leah Lackner, 27, who had taken the day off work as a mental health counselor to join the protest. Her sign read: “I played by the rules.”

57-year-old bond trader Gene Williams joked that he was “one of the bad guys” and said supportively, “The

fact of the matter is, there is a schism between the rich and the poor and it's getting wider.”

Participant and small business owner Jonathan Smucker confronted a Wall Street financial firm executive who held a sign that said ‘get a job’: “Ten percent of Americans are looking for work, most Americans are struggling, and you stand smugly in your suit and say to ‘get a job’. You’re insulting just about everyone in your country,” Smucker said.

At least 200 people have been arrested so far for peaceful assembly and nonviolent civil disobedience, including retired Philadelphia Police Captain Ray Lewis. “All the cops are just workers for the one percent, and they don’t even realize they’re being exploited,” Mr. Lewis said. “As soon as I’m let out of jail, I’ll be right back here and they’ll have to arrest me again.”

History is happening. Scroll down for live video streams and other information.

Live Updates

1:56 pm: at least one medic reports someone bleeding from the head inside the Square. NYPD is preventing medics from helping.

1:53 pm: for no apparent reason, police have invaded Liberty Square and began indiscriminately shoving people and hitting people with batons

1:49 pm: paddy wagons approaching; more and more police surrounding the square; no way in or out; imminent mass arrests anticipated

1:43 pm: police using metal barricades to seal off Liberty Square; peaceful protestors are being told they are not allowed to leave; widespread reports of violence inside

1:38 pm: helmeted police are raiding Liberty Square, batons drawn; they have closed off the entrances and are not letting people in or out

1:26 pm: reports that police are mobilizing just outside Liberty Square; NYPD attempting to search Wikipedia “Free Bradley Manning” truck

12:40 pm: 200+ already arrested; our Day of Action has just begun

12:38 pm: march underway down Broadway to Liberty Square

12:35 pm: all barricades at Liberty Square reportedly down

12:18 pm: triumphant marchers returning to Liberty Square

12:14 pm: global solidarity actions: Occupy LA blocking bridge into financial district; Occupy Portland closes Steel Bridge; 30,000 march in Greece; more updates to come.

11:55 am: one of many video streams, TheOther99,

breaks 20K current viewers, nearly 170K total views

11:52 am: counterterrorism agents spotted, appear oblivious to economic terrorism

11:47 am: “out of the office, into the streets!” Woman runs out of office 65 Broadway and hugs a protester

11:44 am: thousands marching on Wall Street under red and black flag, police rush to erect barricades

11:34 am: sign reads: “Arrest one of us, and two more will appear. You cannot arrest an idea.”

11:32 am: barricades removed from south side of Liberty Square.

11:20 am: Liberty Square re-occupied: Bloomberg, NYPD struggle to quash Occupy Wall Street.

11:11 am: police chaos, officers use barricade as weapon against press, protestors

11:09 am: protestors tearing down NYPD barricades at south side of Liberty Square, chanting: “WHOSE PARK? OUR PARK!” – Police outnumbered, calling in reinforcements.

11:04 am: media denied access past police blockade; coverage of mass arrests censored by NYPD

11:02 am: mass arrests reported at Beaver & Broadway

10:59 am: massive march coming north on Broadway south of Wall. Protestors continue to converge on Liberty Square, which is partially surrounded by helmeted

NYPD

10:53 am: police profiling protesters; checking IDs to access Broadway checkpoints around Wall Street. Video stream shows police selectively allowing some people to pass without ID based on appearance, while blocking other people who “look like protesters” from passing even with ID.

10:44 am: thousands occupying Liberty Square

10:39 am: reports of LRAD sound cannon used by NYPD to disperse protesters singing National Anthem near Pine St

10:37 am: Bloomberg responds to Wall Street shutdown

10:32 am: one march headed down William toward Beaver stopped by police; people who “look like protesters” not allowed to pass, but “suits” allowed through

10:30 am: protesters chanting “her cuffs are too tight” in solidarity with 60 y/o woman who can’t feel her arms after being arrested

10:25 am: police violence continues; protestors defiant, undeterred

10:16 am: via people’s mic: protestors converging in victory march to Liberty Square to celebrate 15 minute delay of NYSE opening bell.

10:14 am: report of sanitation workers blocking Beaver with truck in solidarity with OWS

10:10 am: protesters and police at stand-off at multiple intersections; people's mic breaks out across locations to share heart-breaking, inspirational stories of the 99%

10:07 am: under OWS banner, hundreds use people's mic to tell personal stories of economic exploitation. Sitting in street, intersection of Nassau and Wall. Watch live

10:00 am: 50+ arrested, 60 Wall subway station reported closed.

9:58 am: about 20 protestors locked arms, blocking access to TD Bank

9:56 am: globalrev at 20,000 current viewers.

9:55 am: at least half dozen reporters violently shoved by NYPD

9:52 am: widespread reports of police violence

9:50 am: defying police bullhorn orders, protesters drop banner reading "revolution"

9:43 am: more arrests at Wall and Broadway, pedestrians restricted

9:39 am: NYPD checkpoint at Pine and Broadway, checking ID

9:35 am: theother99 upstream hits 10,000 current viewers, 60,000 total.

9:34 am: NYPD violence forcing marchers to sidewalk

9:27 am: sit-in at Pine and Nassau cleared. If dis-

persed, head there.

9:19 am: police brutality at 60 Wall

9:16 am: retired Philly police Captain Ray Lewis reported arrested.

9:11 am: opening bell delayed!

9:09 am: traders blocked from entering stock exchange

9:07 am: NYPD refusing to give badge numbers

9:06 am: subway 2 and 3 to Wall Street confirmed open, but guarded by NYPD

9:04 am: police arrest woman in wheelchair

9:02 am: reports of 30+ arrested, zip-tied

9:00 am: NYPD confused, overwhelmed

8:58 am: Wall Street workers massing with protestors, unable to enter Wall Street

8:55 am: sitters at Nassau being dragged away, Beaver and New requesting help, police using batons

8:53 am: protestors taking police barricades, barricading Police vehicle

8:49 am: confirmed arrests at Beaver and Broadway, police moving in on Hannover

8:47 am: arrest warning given at Nassau and Pine

8:45 am: people chanting “take the Bull!”

8:41 am: arrests at Wall and Beaver

8:39 am: all entrances to Wall Street occupied, police moving in on Hannover and Wall

8:31 am: protestors blocking intersections

8:29 am: 2 and 3 subways at 60 Wall now reported closed

8:22 am: 2 and 3 subways at 60 Wall reported open.

8:14 am: march continues to grow, “people pouring into street”

8:05 am: police lines reported permeable

7:57 am: marchers taking both sides of streets amidst heavy police and media presence.

7:51 am: march estimated in thousands

November 17, 2011

OWS fights back in a day of global protest

NEWS DISSECTOR BLOG ENTRIES: TWO DAYS EARLIER, New York Police tore apart the Occupy Wall Street campsite with a midnight raid that destroyed personal property, trashed the People's Library and evicted sleeping occupiers. To outsiders, it looked like the movement was through. Guess again: Two days later, on Thursday November 17, a day designated as N17 for national and international action, OWS was back and proud. I was out of action with a serious head cold but I blogged about it by watching the Livestream and Upstream reports direct from Wall Street:

Thursday Morning:

7:15 am: The March is underway, 4 helicopters over Wall Street

Reporters told by cop they will be "Accommodated." Occupy Gathering. Cops kept some demonstrators from joining Telling the crowd to stay on the sidewalk ... Riot cops out, blocking marchers... Mayor had said day would be like normal NYPD barricades going up.

Cops pushing protesters, some marching with their morning coffees ... TV cams walking with them.... motor-

cycle cops out in force Cops forming a line with clubs, in riot gear ... march has broken through their line – demonstrators on all sides Chants of “Gestapo.” Marchers determined to reach Wall Street Cops say protesters don’t have a “parade permit”

7:46 marchers seem to be continuing to move – lots of shoving ... march going around barricade

Several marchers holding a banner that says OCCUPY ... They are dancing with it,

7:49 Marchers now in the street Turning around ... Being Pushed.... Chant of “All Day, All Week, Occupy Wall Street’

Chants of “Our Street” – Stopping and Starting Media in the Front

Comment on Website: When they ring the bell, ring it for justice....

7:54: Market opens at 9:30...many sirens being heard ... March moving to Water Street. Chant: we are the 99%... seems chaotic – sign: “tear down this Wall Street”

244,128 Live Views

People watching stream ... There is also a twitter feed....

Live stream freezes;

8:02 Stream back on They are on Wall Street... Some go around barricade near 60 Wall atrium

8:06 Chant: Banks Got Bailed Out, We Got Sold Out...

8:11 Occupy Wall Street chanted over and over again

8:13 now its “the people united will never be defeated....”

Crowd size estimated at “thousands and thousands”

8:15 Audience of Live Stream 5934

At Broad St: police lines and barricades holding back protests. Cameras everywhere

8:22 Some barricades being moved....

Just saw this on website:

From Those Inside Of Central Booking

Posted 14 hours ago on Nov. 16, 2011, 5:24 p.m. EST by OccupyWall St

While we’ve been imprisoned here we’ve held Assemblies and Mic Checked corrections officers to attend to urgent medical conditions, some of which were the result of police brutality during the raids. There is no food except for bread, no cleanliness, no hygiene, no waters, no showers. There are non-occupiers who are suffering here as well.

We do not know what we have been charged with.

We want freedom!

This message was issued by a group of occupiers imprisoned by Billionaire Michael Bloomberg and his private army, and relayed to members of the Legal Working Group of #ows.

Back to March:

8:26 – chants of “this is what democracy looks like”

Protesters lack communications many streets blocked’

8:38 Stream Frozen Again

8:42 Switched to <http://www.livestream.com/global-revolution>

They say OWS surrounds Stock Exchange.... more views including high up view – cops protecting the Bull (statue) on lower Broadway...

The Other 99 back up – cops are now saying if anyone is on sidewalk. Move them out

Some singing: We Shall Over Come Some Day

8:48 Police holding plastic cuffs, may be going in for arrests soon

8:51 some Sitting Down Are Being Busted...3 arrests reported

8:54 Standoff at Pine and Williams

Global Revolution Site seems to be relaying an RT (Russia Today) feed

9:00 More activists sitting in intersection – getting arrested. Chant is “this is a non-violent protest

9:04 Aerial view shows cops tangling with and being challenged by protesters.. Looks rough

The Other 99 livestream reports at least 30 arrests ... some

workers not getting to their buildings

Chants of Shame, Shame as arrests continue – some employees blocked from work....

Cheers on report of delay of opening bell because people can't get to work

9:13 Police Buses coming through for arrests ... strange report of arrest of former Philadelphia police Captain who supports Occupy...

9:44: Everyone – cops and protesters – are milling around.

Month Two

Today is the 2nd Month Anniversary of the Occupation of Zuccotti Park and a day of Global Protest: Here is your invitation from the Campaign for Peace and Democracy

November 17th is the worldwide Occupy Day of Action.

When the occupiers cry out against mounting inequality, against joblessness and insecurity, against obscene levels of student debt, against anti-labor employers, against police brutality, against foreclosures, evictions, and the lack of healthcare, they are protesting the same corporate elites and the politicians beholden to them who insist that the United States be the Number One military power in the world.

The Campaign for Peace and Democracy supports

the occupation movement both because we endorse its domestic goals, and because we believe that the only way we will achieve a new, democratic and peaceful U.S. foreign policy is to successfully challenge these elites at home.

From New York to Berkeley, and across the world, occupiers have been under attack – but in a remarkable show of resistance and resilience, people are saying “We’re not going away!”

Homeland Security Advised Raids On Occupy Wall Street Camps

According to Rick Ellis at the Examiner, a Justice Department official says that the recent evictions of Occupy movement across the country including Salt Lake City, Denver, Portland, Oakland, and New York City were “coordinated with help from Homeland Security, the FBI and other federal police agencies.”

MY QUESTIONS: : How High Up Did This Go? Was the White House or the President’s National Security Advisor involved?

Phase Two?

Misery. The rain just added to the sense of misery of many in OWS who have lost the Park. But it was also a wake-up call, because its time to move on to phase 2, and

in many ways, the brutal mid-morning forcible eviction by NYPD storm troopers – cause that’s how they acted – showed that OWS can survive this. And will survive it.

Today is a day of international action which is likely to be bigger and bolder thanks to the asshole decision of Michael Bloomberg who has lost with many, any credibility he may have once had.

I have never seen Keith Olbermann more effectively demolish a politician than as he’s done in a special comment that builds in intensity as it goes on. Excerpt:

“Who else but a cliché like Bloomberg could take a protest beginning to grow a little stale around the edges and vault it back in the headlines, complete with mortifying scenes of police dressed as storm troopers, carrying military weapons, using figurative bazookas to kill figurative mosquitoes.

“Who else but an archetype like Bloomberg could claim a group of protesters was making too much noise in a residential area and then choose to try to disperse them by bringing out LRAD audio cannons, machines that send painful waves of sound indiscriminately over the very same residential area?

“Who else but a cartoon like Bloomberg could have become rich creating a multi-billion-dollar media and news company and then authorize illegally preventing reporters from witnessing police actions he claimed were utterly legal, and then authorize the arrests of four reporters at a church?

“Who else but a human platitude like Bloomberg could have just gotten back from Jerusalem – and the dedication of a ten-million-dollar medical facility for which he generously paid – and then enabled the image of policemen seizing 5,500 books from the Occupy Wall Street library, and throwing them in a Dumpster as if the cops were book burners?

“Who else but a hypocrite like Bloomberg could have overridden – by a backroom deal with the New York City Council – the results of two separate referendums, limiting those in his office to just two terms as mayor, so he could serve a third term? And then had police arrest, beat up and incarcerate a member of the New York City Council?”

The next day

From the NewsDissector.com (.net) (.net) blog posted that morning. I picked up my blog coverage on November 18th, the next day:

Let Us Now Praise Michael Bloomberg

James Agee’s famous “Let Us Now Praise Famous Men” came to mind in thinking about a smarmy Mayor by the name of Michael Bloomberg who some at the protest last night at Foley Square felt deserved some praise for the way he cracked down on Occupy Wall Street.

That’s right, they were saying, “Thank you Mayor B.”

The night before his midnight raid out of media view, some activists were worrying that it was becoming harder

and harder to control the many who had out of personal need drifted to Zuccotti Park and brought their pains and troubled personalities with them. Some were disruptive and clearly not there for a protest.

There were other concerns about divisive arguments that were on high boil and some feared could have splintered the movement.

Thanks to Mike The Mayor, and the predictable heavy handedness of the NYPD, the Occupy movement unified once again to mount a day of extraordinary day direct actions on Wall Street and later on subways across the City. The day, identified by most as N17 ended with a rally at Foley Square with major unions and as many as 20,000 people to celebrate the Movement's second month anniversary. The evening was capped with a memorable march by ten thousand across the same Brooklyn Bridge where 700 members of the movement were busted by a sneaky maneuver by the cops a month earlier.

In mid-day, as I was taking the subway down to Foley Square, I saw activists and police on my neighborhood train station as part of an Occupy Subway action. The protesters held up personal signs.

While Billionaire Bloomberg's political star has fallen, his adversaries has risen.

The New Republic put it this way: "Michael Bloomberg isn't having a very good week. The New York mayor is

being pilloried for his decision to chase the Occupy Wall Street protesters out of Zuccotti Park in a heavy-handed, pre-dawn raid, at which he tried to defend his decision was a weaselly dance around his motivations. But Bloomberg isn't just having a bad week. He's having a bad third term. His politics and his demeanor appear to be wearing thin in New York. And we can understand why.

For one thing, there have been his tone-deaf statements about the economic situation, and his tendency to make excuses for bankers.”

Robert Scheer salutes the Mayor, too, on Truthdig:

“In the pantheon of billionaires without shame, Michael Bloomberg, the Wall Street banker-turned-business-press-lord-turned-mayor, is now secure at the top. What is so offensive is that someone who abetted Wall Street greed, and benefited as much as anyone from it, has no compunction about ruthlessly repressing those who dare exercise their constitutional ‘right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances’ that he helped to create.”

Those Wall Street banksters backed by Bloomberg were targeted by a ground game of non-violent guerrilla warfare earlier in the morning when they moved from the defensive to the offensive, charging on to Wall Street and its environs. I watched the action on the Livestream and the Upstream offering three video sources capturing

the confrontation between the Cops and their barricades and the kids and their resourcefulness.”

Back to the streets

The activists of OWS didn't completely shut down the street but they didn't leave it the same either. The masters of the universe, who had lorded it over all of us for so long, were confronted with a massive display of militant public disgust. New York police arrested 99 more Occupy Wall Street protesters early Thursday evening, a high-ranking member of the city police department said. Earlier Thursday, police said 177 people had been arrested.

Occupy Wall Street organizers had said that 99 people were prepared to be sit down in a street and be arrested – a symbolic number, as the activists purport to represent the interests of 99% of the population.

Timeline

The Timeline on the OWS.org website:

8:23 pm: There is now a people's library, a marching band and a projector on the Brooklyn Bridge, according to @occupywallst people on the ground.

8:00 pm: City councilor Jumaane Williams may have been arrested at the foot of Brooklyn Bridge

7:54 pm: General assembly held at 8 at the Korean War Memorial Park, just past Brooklyn Bridge.

7:52 pm: From @John Harkinson, thousands of people with music, signs, honks of support. Everything peaceful.

7:30 pm: The column marching on Brooklyn bridge stretches about a mile long.

7:09 pm: A Light Show on Brooklyn Bridge is projecting “Occupy Earth – we are winning” on the side of the Verizon Building. Followed by “Happy Birthday Occupy-wallstNYC” Reported by @occupywallst

7:06 pm: Police scanners estimate the crowd at 32,650 people. Reported by @jstetser

7:01 pm: Entrance of Brooklyn Bridge City Hall station closed.

7:00 pm: One source gives around 2,000 protesters on Brooklyn Bridge

6:44 pm: Taking Canal St.

6:42 pm: On the Brooklyn Bridge.

6:35 pm: From TheOther99, reports of NYPD intimidating the press, told Tim Pool he would have his press card revoked if he was arrested.

6:30 pm: City Hall is locked down, from @JoshHarkinson

6:15 pm: marching towards Brooklyn Bridge from Foley Square, chanting “Whose Streets? Our Streets!”

5:30 pm: #OWS shuts down Canal St.

5:25 pm: NYPD cavalry begins to be appear on Centre

Street.

5:16 pm: 90 Fifth Avenue occupied by students from Pratt, Columbia, NYU, Hunter pic.twitter.com/IBNwU-wpJ

5:07 pm: more police sirens heard headed toward Foley

5:00 pm: chant: “Bloomberg beware, Zuccotti Park is everywhere!”

Other Occupy News

Democracy Now reported: “Police departments across the country are coming under criticism for using excessive force against Occupy Wall Street protesters during the past two months. In Seattle, Mayor Mike McGinn apologized Wednesday, hours after an 84-year-old retired Seattle schoolteacher named Dorli Rainey was pepper-sprayed in the face during a protest.

Photographs of her moments after she was pepper-sprayed went viral, showing the chemical irritant and liquid used to treat it dripping from her chin. According to Occupy Seattle organizers, a priest and a pregnant teenager were also pepper-sprayed Tuesday night. “My problem is not only with police brutality,” Rainey says. “It’s with the progressively getting worse attitude of the police.”

Comments

Robert Weissman, of Public Citizen on Occupy Wall Street:

“Occupy Wall Street has helped focus national attention on the crucial problems of our day: unchecked corporate power that chokes our economy and democracy, rising inequality that betrays the basic promise of America, joblessness when there’s work to be done, foreclosures that displace families and leave houses empty, and much more.

“The hardy bands of Occupy protesters in New York and around the country have fundamentally altered the national conversation – and not just in the media. Political and campaign discourse has changed.

“The Occupy movement already has done more to help this country than anyone could reasonably have imagined. But it’s just getting started. The movement won’t be deterred by eviction efforts in New York or Portland or Oakland or St. Louis or Nashville or anywhere else. ‘We are the 99 percent’ is not a call that can be so easily silenced, nor a movement that can be stopped. Public Citizen salutes, celebrates and supports Occupy Wall Street and the Occupy movement.”

Poetry For The People

To keep the positive vibe going, here's part of a poem from Tikkun Magazine for the 99 percent. Poet Josh Healey explained:

“On Tuesday night, I was out on Sproul Plaza at UC Berkeley, with over 10,000 people reclaiming the space for OccupyCal. I was there to receive the Mario Savio Young Activist Award, which had been scheduled for the same night across the plaza inside Pauley Ballroom. But with thousands of people outside demanding free speech and equal education on the very same steps that Mario Savio had once stood himself, the two events were beautifully combined, and I was able to give my poem outside with the people, right where it belonged.”

When Hope Comes Back

(A Poem for the 99%)

when Hope comes back
he will be more than a campaign slogan
and a face on a poster faded red, white, and blue
he will not come from a presidential palace
bought and paid for like a Citibank stock option villa
he will put not forget to put on his walking shoes
and join the picket lines in New York
the bread lines in Baltimore
to shake the calloused hands

of everyone walking by
when Hope comes back
he might be named Barack
but he won't be named Obama
when Hope comes back
he will be a Black Panther baby
who speaks Spanglish
and cooks Korean tacos
and does 180 sun salutations
to the soundtrack of Zion I
- yes, Hope is hella Bay
when Hope comes back
he will be a UFW farmworker
who loves his fields and his flag
more than he hates his foreman
he will be a runaway foster child
who forgives his parents
he will be an Iraq war veteran
who returns to protest in Oakland again
without tear gas canisters to his head
when Hope comes back
he will come back from the future
in a DeLorean like Michael J. Fox
and show us all the things we'd won

November 19

The Bat Signal salutes the 99%

WE LIVE IN AN AGE OF SUPERBOWLS AND SUPER COMMITTEES with millions hoping that some new superheroes will turn up to save us from a downward spiral of intractable problems.

A week ago, while New York's Mayor was scolding Occupy Wall Street protesters for blocking sidewalks and streets, his Police Department was assisting a movie company that was making a new Batman film that screwed up traffic on a major highway for hours.

Hollywood movies bring big bucks into town, even if the people have to be inconvenienced, but now the Batman story has a new meaning.

We all know the narrative.

Bruce Wayne, a member in good standing of the 1%, in the town of Gotham created a secret headquarters for a character called Batman, based in the family mansion. It was there that he launched a war on crime that soon had a young recruit at his side, Dick Grayson, originally known as, Robin the Wonder boy. His witty Butler helped the team pull off its death-defying missions.

This dynamic duo soon became the stuff of legends

– thanks to an entertainment industry that promoted the story into a billion dollar empire driven, first, by the sale of comic books and then major Hollywood films.

The story resonated not only because of the thrilling stunts and specialized cars that helped them pull it off but because of a story line, an urban legend about men with special powers who could rescue their town from certain doom.

One recurring scene involved a special light with the sign of a bat that would be projected by the Police Commissioner onto buildings to summon Batman and Robin into action.

In the real world, New York created its own modern day Batman and Robin in the form of Mayor Michael Bloomberg, an ambitious billionaire who sallied forth in the company of his own Robin, Police Chief Ray Kelly, to save the City from itself.

The Batman story had been turned inside out.

The old fashioned crime bosses the original Batman fought soon disappeared from view to be replaced, in the real world, by a caste of white collar criminals who used their perches on Wall Street to accumulate vast wealth from fraud and leverage in a financial system operating without regulation or restraint.

The Joker was on us.

When a small group of rebels, began to challenge this system, the Mayor brought out the other bats, now called truncheons, to sometimes brutally defend the banksters and their allies from the non-violent demands of a growing army of anger called Occupy Wall Street, They had tried to shut down Wall Street but thousands of riot police with barricades and batons assured they could only slow it down.

The American Bankers Association has reportedly now been pitched by a top-lobbying firm to launch a \$845,000 media campaign to counter Occupy Wall Street.

Some wise guys on The Street, as its known, baited the protests with signs that read “Occupy A Job or a Desk,” apparently unaware of how difficult it is for young people to find jobs, partly through their own speculative gambling.

On November 15th, New York’s Batman Bloomberg shut down the Occupy Wall Street encampment in the middle of the night while banning the press. He rounded up as many troublemakers as he could, and now has his cops spying on the rest, even in churches.

To the surprise of many, this rag tag movement survived several mass arrests and denunciations from on high, has just celebrated its second month of daily

protests with the press speculating about its future.

James Stewart, a Pulitzer prize winning columnist in the New York Times, has been persuaded that the Occupy Wall Street movement has potential and staying power, while his colleagues picture it as little more than a short-lived media phenomenon, “The issues that spawned the movement – income inequality, money in politics and Wall Street’s influence – were being drowned out by debates over personal hygiene, noise and crime ... But critics and supporters alike suggest that the influence of the movement could last decades, and that it might even evolve into a more potent force.”

When the movement marched on triumph on November 17, a day of global action, its numbers had swelled to 40,000 with union support. They crossed the hundred plus year old Brooklyn Bridge where 700 had been arrested a month earlier.

As they did, they looked up at a building owned by the Verizon phone company.

There they saw and cheered an unexpected surprise, a dramatic image, a new bat signal, no longer a demand for help from a philanthropic plutocrats but, now an appeal to the people, to the 99%, to get involved.

The website Portside reported: “One of the most

impressive moments of yesterday's Occupy Wall Street marches, was when someone projected a giant 99% 'bat signal' on the side of one of lower Manhattan's skyscrapers as thousands of people swarmed across the nearby Brooklyn Bridge. New Yorkers know the Verizon Building, as the windowless, concrete eyesore that looms over the bridge and mars the downtown skyline, so seeing it used in such a way certainly got a lot of attention.

"But who did it? And how were they able to project the stories-high words on the building just as the protesters made their way over the span? Boing Boing's Xenia Jardin spoke to Mark Read, one of the Occupy Wall Street organizers who pulled together a team of friends and artists that arranged for the projection to happen.

"Read says he got help from two video projection artists, Max Nova and JR Skola, who used a 12,000 lumen projector and programmed the software needed to properly program the message. He also found an apartment in a nearby housing project from where they safely angle the projection on to the building. He says he offered to rent the apartment from a single mother of three, but when she found out what they wanted to use it for – and saw what happened during the eviction of Zuccotti Park – she refused to

take their money.”

Talk about modern urban legends. This bat signal is now featured on You Tube, with music by Hollywood’s Hans Zimmer. The song: “To Know My Enemy.”

In its own eyes, this movement, led by young people deeply immersed in popular culture, has become a Batman out to save America from crime and corruption. And it’s doing so in the name of the majority, the 99%.

November 20, 2011

Occupy this: poetry survives the trashing of people's library

ONE OF THE CLEAREST INDICATORS OF A FASCIST MENTALITY is its contempt for ideas it disagrees with.

The Nazis staged mass book burnings, and some religious zealots followed in their footsteps, in our country, by burning rock and roll records they considered the “Devil’s Music.” The war on Sarajevo began with the burning of its world acclaimed library by rightwing nationalists who found the city too multi-cultural for their tastes.

Here in New York, our “liberal,” but opportunistically Republican, Mayor, Michael Bloomberg, supports the New York Public Library. He also supported the right of that fanatic, fundamentalist minister Terry Jones, to burn the Quran to protest Islam.

“I happen to think that it is distasteful. I don’t think he would like it if somebody burnt a book that in his religion he thinks is holy,” he said a year ago, “But the First Amendment protects everybody, and you can’t say that we’re going to apply the First Amendment to only those cases where we are in agreement.”

So what does this self-styled upholder of the First Amendment say today after the New York Police Depart-

ment, under his command, trashed The People's Library at Liberty Plaza (Zuccotti Park,) the base camp of the Occupy Wall Street Movement?

So far, he's said nothing!

You can see pictures of the destruction of the library at <http://peopleslibrary.wordpress.com>

Amy Goodman was one of the few journalists who managed to get into the Park while the Police tore it apart, wrote, "we saw a broken bookcase in one pile. Deeper in the park, I spotted a single book on the ground. It was marked "OWSL", for Occupy Wall Street Library, also known as the People's Library, one of the key institutions that had sprung up in the organic democracy of the movement. By the latest count, it had accumulated 5,000 donated books. The one I found, amidst the debris of democracy that was being hauled off to the dump, was *Brave New World Revisited*, by Aldous Huxley."

I was in the Park this past Saturday with one of the People's librarians. She pointed to one of only a handful of broken and waterlogged books that they recovered from the trash.

She also noted that a new pile of books had been donated since the forced and brutal eviction earlier in the week. Among them was Howard Zinn's collection of voices from the People's History of the United States.

Also, this weekend, the Library issued a new PDF ver-

sion of its unique and impassioned anthology of poetry, You can read the work at www.peopleslibrary.wordpress.com/2011/11/17/occupy-wall-street-poetry-anthology

Poets from all over the world are supporting the library, as the People's Library website explains:

“Poets from around the world have been sending poems to the People's Library in an effort to create a living/breathing poetry anthology in solidarity with the Occupy Wall St. movement. All poems are accepted into the anthology. The anthology is updated on a weekly basis. If you'd like a poem added to the anthology email stephenjboyer@gmail.com and please include 'occupy poetry' in the subject.”

Apparently, poets can be considered dangerous. The former Poet Laureate of the United States, Robert Hass, a professor of poetry at Berkeley, was beaten by police during an Occupy protest on campus.

He later described what occurred, “It was stunning to see. They swung hard into their chests and bellies. Particularly shocking to me – it must be a generational reaction was that they assaulted both the young men and the young women with the same indiscriminate force. If the students turned away, they pounded their ribs. If they turned further away to escape, they hit them on their spines.”

Back in New York, the People's Library emerged in

a city that is cutting back on the hours its libraries are open, a town which has also seen the recent closures of major bookstores – including a Borders right up the block – because of failures in their Wall Street-driven speculative financing and expansion plans. Their own debt schemes brought them down.

Just as Mayor Bloomberg and his storm-like troopers can't evict an idea, the People's Library will not be burned and only get stronger. The Librarians are being asked by OWS lawyers for an inventory which will become part of a lawsuit against the city. The fact that the many of the books were used, and donated, may make it harder to get a financial settlement.

This does not mean that the “owner” of the park, Brookfield Properties won't try to stop the return of the Library. “This is a park, not a bookstore,” a Brookfield executive shouted at librarians demanding that they remove books from a ledge on which no one was sitting. I watched as he tried to bully the occupiers, tossing signs and memorabilia into pails of garbage.

The battle of the books is not over.

Nevertheless some occupiers continue to turn their slogans into poems, like this one hurled at cops hidden behind hard plastic face masks: “Take Off Your Riot Gear. There's No Riot Here!”

Dateline here

Occupy Wall Street is all over the media, but for how long?

ONE OF THE OLDEST PATTERNS OF MEDIA COVERAGE CAN be summed up this way: First, they ignore you. Then, they ridicule you. Then, they realize you are a story and fall in love. So they build you up at first, but then, all at once, tear you down

You may not have changed, but they have, addicted as they are to keep coming up with shifting story lines, more to fight their own boredom and fear of tune-out, than the validity or importance of the topic.

In the same way, that political sound bite over the years went from over thirty seconds to five, or that MTV style editing soon invaded the newsrooms with quick cutting and razzle-dazzle effects, to “cover news” while making it difficult to concentrate on, much less comprehend the fast paced presentation techniques.

When asked by researchers, audiences could barely tell you what they had just seen, much less what it means.

We saw this in Iraq, when during the invasion, it was war all the time, literally around the clock, but when you looked closely, it wasn't about Iraq or Iraqis at all. It was about a narrative of US good guys slaying bad guys, cow-boys versus Indians. That was it!

There was rarely other news, but what there was “AAU”
– All About US.

Now, with Occupy Wall Street, the pattern is similar. The underlying issues largely don’t exist in the media – if they require any explanation or analysis. Knowledge about Wall Street and the economy is assumed and simplified as if one word, “greed,” sums it all up.

Conflict drives the news.

There was little reporting on the occupation when it started. It was only after the cops began pepper spraying protesters the media arrived en masse. Once they had adversaries, or there was violence, coverage increased. That they could understand.

Soon, they flocked to Zuccotti Park like blue birds. When one landed, they all landed. The TV trucks were everywhere especially at 6 and 11 pm. so that local reporters could do silly live stand-ups and show off colorful characters to reinforce the narrative that the protesters were just having fun, and had no serious ideas.

Many of these frontline reporters couldn’t tell you the difference between a derivative and a donut, but that didn’t matter because what does matter is face time, air-time, visibility.

First, the international press recognized that this movement was important. Then, Zuccotti Park became a mini-United Nations with crews from BBC, Al Jazeera, Xinhua

News Agency, Russia Today, Press TV et al.

When others took it seriously, the American press began to do the same, and then network TV got into the act, once it was realized that this was a national, even a global story

Occupy Wall Street soon had a press desk trying to help reporters who often showed up with preconceived story lines demanded by their editors. Soon the stories about sex, drugs and drumming – no rock and roll yet – were everywhere as they turned over rocks and looked for the homeless and the harassers.

When one station reported the park is now a “Walmart for Rats,” story, City Hall saw an opening and began harping on cleanliness. That was used that as a pretext for evicting the occupiers for the most park outside of the media’s view. There was brutality but it was hard to see in the dark of night.

Most activists were happy to be interviewed but few ever watched how the stories they were in were edited: what was covered and what was not.

That’s also because many of the occupiers hate television and what it has become. They don’t read ponderous editorials or inflammatory headlines.

What they do read and create is social media – Twitter, Facebook, and You Tube etc.

The advantage is that they are then exposed to their

truths and the news they believe they need to makes a difference.

Its news, though, for the community, not the country!

The disadvantage is they often are not reaching out to millions of Americans who won't join the movement because it's cool. The 99% needs to be educated and inspired – but, alas, they rely on the tabloid newspapers and cable news that is least sympathetic to the movement.

You have to use media if you want to occupy the mainstream – and build a larger movement as opposed to being depicted as a tribal subculture of misfits and the angry. You need your own mainstream media campaign.

I would suspect that the Occupy Movement has not met with or tried to persuade editorial boards or newsroom execs. They tend to react more to what others are saying than to act more proactively with their own media campaigns to shape a different message that gets disseminated widely.

As the movement moves on, messages have to change and target specific communities. This approach may be coming, but not quickly enough.

Already some big media outlets like The Washington Post, the paper still living off its Watergate reputation even as it finds few wars it won't support, is saying Occupy Wall Street is "Over."

You can bet they want it to be over because their focus on politics starts with the top, with the President at the White House and VIPs – very important politicians. They specialize in inside the beltway stories, institutional politics, not oppositional politics.

For years, black people in Washington – the majority – have complained that they are largely ignored by their hometown newspaper.

Post editors are self-satisfied and cloistered 1 percenters who prefer to cover social movements of the past, not the present.

I once looked at how the Post covered the March on Washington back in 1963. The story line was on how violence was averted. MLK's "I Have A Dream" speech was barely news. The march's focus on the need for jobs was downplayed then, just as Occupy Wall Streets economic critique is downplayed today.

The Movement is being challenged by Mayors – armed with the latest "non-lethal" toys – and coordinated by the Feds (a story few media outlets have investigated) who want to and have shut down the encampments.

Yes, it's wrong and unconstitutional and unfair, but is this a battle they can win? Yes, many can go to jail but what message does that send?

Occupy Wall Street is not about camping, its about crusading for justice. Even Murdoch's Wall Street Journal

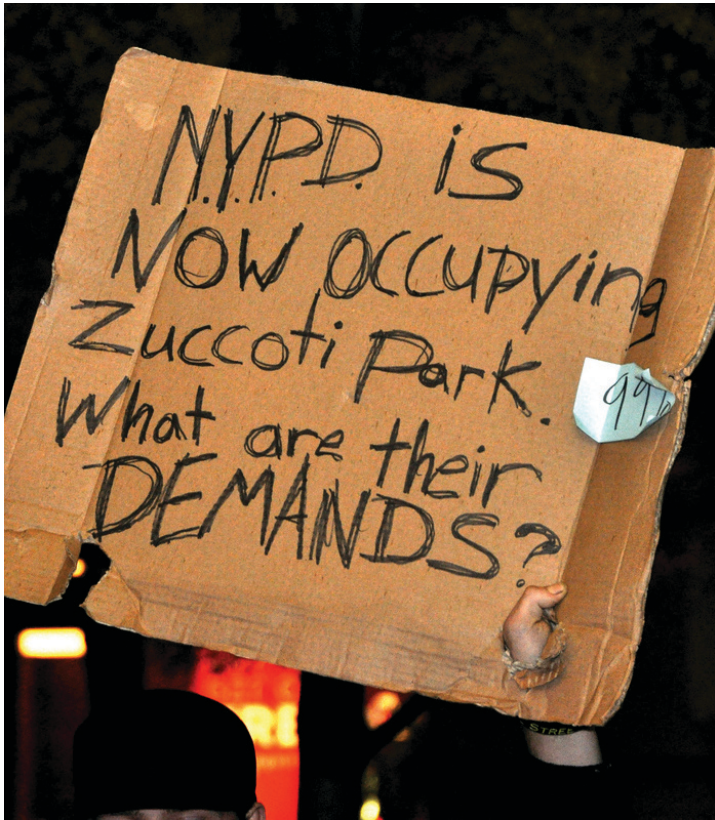
(Not the Occupied version) is praising the protests.

“This Thanksgiving weekend, Wall Street should say a prayer of gratitude for Occupy Wall Street. While some bankers and brokers have sympathized with or supported this ragtag protest movement, others grouse that they are being demonized. But compared with financiers of the past, who faced nasty rhetoric, political hostility and physical danger, today’s bankers and brokers seem like a bunch of babies when they whine about being targeted by these dissidents. The “Occupy” rhetoric might sound overheated, but it is golden praise alongside what bankers used to hear.”

Thus at least some of the 1% are hearing the message, but, ironically, they don’t feel it’s strong enough.

It’s the 99% that the movement should aim at with actions and media that demonstrates they are on their side. They need more creative forms of mass outreach and organizing to remake a community of activists as a mass movement with demands that the people can resonate with and find ways of supporting. What about political infomercials? Large concerts and TV spots and ads?

Media hype for activism can help but it’s no substitute for less glamorous organizing. In the end, that will be the test of whether the movement is “over” or goes over the top.



Part 6

A Cold December

December 5

Who is winning the War on Wall Street?

WALL STREET HAS BECOME A BATTLEGROUND, DEFENDED by a battalion of New York Cops, and under surveillance around the clock. There's a guerilla war under way after months of protests and assaults by the non-violent warriors of Occupy Wall Street.

Who's winning?

On the surface, despite major layoffs and economic setbacks, you would have to say that the epicenter of our financial markets is alive, if not well. The exchanges and banks remain open for business, even if their costs for security are up, and their long-term optimism is way down. Attempts by occupiers and activists to "shut it down" have so far failed, but they have slowed it down and forced its defenders on the defensive. A sharp critique of out of control capitalism that was barely heard in the media before the movement began. It is now everywhere. The Movement has changed the national conversation. The gluttons of greed are, at least temporarily, on the defensive. But, is the movement forcing reforms or restraint?. Not yet. Europe's pain so far seems to be America's gain, as bailouts there drive stock prices

here higher.

Also, as we are learning, there is not much that the Federal Reserve won't do behind the scenes to keep big banks flourishing. We just found out, 3 years after the fact, that they pumped a whopping \$17.7 TRILLION in no interest money into the coffers of financial institutions whose lobbyists and media decry big government intervention and Socialism.

Down, the street, the Occupiers are winning a moral victory just by surviving. Their slogan de jour is now "It's So Not Over," even as they lost the Park that was their base and have suffered setbacks across the country by what seems like a coordinated Municipal counter-offensive.

Public opinion seems to turn against protesters when there's violence or conduct considered outrageous, but the New York Times reports, "The Occupy Wall Street protests continue to spread around the country, highlighting grievances some Americans have about banks, income inequality and a sense that the poor and middle class have been disenfranchised. A recent New York Times/CBS News poll found that almost half of the public thinks the sentiments at the root of the movement generally reflect the views of most Americans."

So, on one level, Wall Street is losing whatever posi-

tive reputation in may have enjoyed, even if the Movement challenging it still lacks a specific program.

What would winning consist of in this context?

For the financiers and the investors, it's all about money and they are still making it, even if bonuses go down for a while. They continue to deepen inequality by transferring wealth from the rest of us into their pockets. The 1% is hardly hurting the way the 99% is

Their lobbyists and the politicians that follow their lead have managed to thwart any real financial reforms, mild as they were. Risky derivatives remain risky. The Industry has succeeded in keeping a shadowy banking system none – transparent, despite the agencies that are lowering their credit ratings and the State Attorney Generals that are beginning to summon up the courage to file lawsuits.

Sustaining the movement into Spring is Occupy's main challenge. Can the movement handle and allocate the funds they raised, and can they raise more? Can they manage the internal conflicts between cities and activists with differing ideas and physical needs?

Can they build bridges to the mainstream and avoid marginalization?

Critics of Occupy Wall Street want the movement to grow up, be more focused and “pragmatic” as in engaging in policy debates defined by others. In a specious

denunciation of “The Decadent Left,” Russ Douthat, one of The Times Op Ed wags, snipes that the “movement was dreamed up in part by flakes, and populated in part by fantasists.”

To him, being political means moving from the outside to the inside and lose the very qualities and political outlook that built the movement. It means not aligning with unions or building coalitions. It means playing the game. In contrast, I believe the movement has to stay true to itself, but make all of these issues more personal to the American people who are suffering because of Wall Street’s manipulations.

They have to be told who is really responsible for their terrible distress: the loss of jobs, pensions and homes.

The information is there – but the movement needs to find ways of dramatizing it and communicating it, the more specific and less rhetorical the better.

It’s time for an economic justice campaign that names and shames the reprehensible Wall Street elite, a crew of insiders traders and CEOs – that constitutes less than 1% of the 1%.

We have to demand three I’s and a P:

1. Investigate who stole what
2. Indict wrong doers
3. Prosecute the guilty
4. And Incarcerate White Collar Criminals

That's how to send a signal to Wall Street: Make it personal!

Go after prosecutors in cities, states and the Justice to force them to explain why none of the big banksters responsible for our economic misery have, so far, gone to jail. (More than 1700 fraudsters were imprisoned after the far less serious S&L crisis.)

These CEO's knew what they were doing and they are getting away with it!

This approach won't transform the economy but it will make the targets of the campaign more concrete, visible and immediate. It raises demands for economic fairness that most Americans support.

The current system of agencies agreeing to settlements without anyone admitting responsibility has to stop.

The cover-ups by politicians and the complicit of media have to stop.

We have had bailouts. Now, its time for a "jailout!"

Talk about an issue that so many agree on but yet has been so politicized and so minimized by prosecutors seeking excuses.

Yes, the Industry has a flotilla of high priced lawyers who know how to evade and avoid justice. Yes, they rewritten the laws to make it hard to convict.

But, until now, there has been no one in the streets –

with protests or pitchforks – demanding justice. Occupy Wall Street has shown that you can influence the agenda. This issue is a no-brainer. Will the Occupy Movement Embrace it?

Update: February 2012 -

GOOD DAYS COMING

Everything changes, the wheel of the law turns without pause.

After the rain, good weather.

In the wink of an eye

...After sorrow comes happiness."

Ho Chi Minh wrote those words in a poem in prison. He projected optimism, unaware, I am sure, how many decades it would take for Vietnam's liberation movement to prevail, or for that happiness the looked forward to would reach his countrymen and women.

Social movements have always ebbed and flowed, advanced and retreated, depending on public perceptions, media attention, strategic opportunities and their own organizational capacities.

The Occupy Movement grew explosively only to encounter resistance and repression.

One by one, their encampments were shut down after more than 6000 arrests.

The Empire struck back while the 1% went about the busi-

ness of looting more resources. paying themselves, al be it, smaller but still outrageous bonuses, while inequality intensified at home, and the economic crisis spread throughout Europe with no solutions in sight.

Predictably, as external pressures grew, internal disagreements intensified. I sat in on many discussions in the public atrium at 60 Wall Street where OWS groups converged to watch intense discussions consume hours of debate. There were reports of police infiltrators and provocateurs. There were concerns that the “black block” anarchists might be police agents. There was a fall-off of activism and uncertainty in the ranks.

The Mass media reported on what looked like an unraveling. Here’s the *New York Times* recognizing that the movement was not spent but expressing concern about where it was heading – concerns I shared.

“Far from dissipating, groups around the country say they are preparing for a new phase of larger marches and strikes this spring that they hope will rebuild momentum and cast an even brighter glare on inequality and corporate greed. But this transition is filled with potential pitfalls and uncertainties: without the visible camps or clear goals, can Occupy become a lasting force for change? Will disruptive protests do more to galvanize or alienate the public?”

So far, these questions have no answers.



Part 7

***“It’s So
Not Over”***

CODA

Song for Occupy Wall Street

By singer-songwriter David Rovics

Because this is where they buy the politicians
Because this is where power has its seat
Because ninety-nine percent of us are suffering
At the mercy of the madmen on this street
Because all of us are victims of class warfare
Being waged on us by the one percent
Because these greedy banksters rob the country
Leaving us without the means to pay the rent
Because the last time that we had a decent government
Was about 1932
Because we the people are supposed to run the country
But instead it's all run by and for the few
Because now we know the rich do not pay taxes
But when they need a hand it's us who bail them out
Because we suspected we lived in a plutocracy
But suddenly of late there is no doubt

And so we're gonna stay right here (2x)

Because both my parents lost their savings
Because I have never opened an account

Because the interest on my credit card just doubled
And now I can't pay the minimum amount
Because these budget cuts are just immoral
With our schools as overcrowded as they are
Because there are no buses where I live
But I can't afford to drive a car
Because so many of us don't have health insurance
The rest of us have it but it sucks
Because the rich are riding in their private jets
While the rest of us are slogging through the muck
Because capitalism isn't working
This system has just failed to produce
Because the one percent is prospering
While the rest of us just suffer their abuse

Because it has been demonstrated amply
That the winners are the ones who stick around
Because this world should belong to everyone
Not just the banksters who would smash it to the
ground
Because we've noticed voting doesn't change things
When the politicians are mostly millionaires
Because we're learning how to stand up like Tunisians
Like they did in Tahrir Square
Where a young man named Mohamed Bouazizi
Struck a match that lit up all the Earth

And all around the world the spell was broken
And a movement for the future was in birth
Because there's only so much sh** the rich can feed us
Before we figure out which side we're on
Because we've learned if we want our liberation
It will come only if we stay here til the rising of the
dawn

Because corporations are not people
And we can't just let them choose
Because if we leave our fate to them
Then all of us will surely lose
Because the climate clock is ticking
And we can't just leave our world behind
Because corporate rule isn't working
And it's time for humans' hearts and minds
Because you can't take it with you
Because the rich just do not care
Because it doesn't matter how much you make
But how much you can share
Because these moments don't come often
Because we want truly to be free
Because we know what really matters
Something called society

November 21, 2011

Documents of Occupy Wall Street

(as of November 21, 2011)

*Documents Of the New York General Assembly
of Occupy Wall Street*

1. Declaration of the Occupation of New York City

This document was accepted by the NYC General Assembly on September 29, 2011

As we gather together in solidarity to express a feeling of mass injustice, we must not lose sight of what brought us together. We write so that all people who feel wronged by the corporate forces of the world can know that we are your allies.

As one people, united, we acknowledge the reality: that the future of the human race requires the cooperation of its members; that our system must protect our rights, and upon corruption of that system, it is up to the individuals to protect their own rights, and those of their neighbors; that a democratic government derives its just power from the people, but corporations do not seek consent to extract wealth from the people and the Earth; and that no true democracy is attainable when

the process is determined by economic power. 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. We have peaceably assembled here, as is our right, to let these facts be known.

They have taken our houses through an illegal foreclosure process, despite not having the original mortgage.

They have taken bailouts from taxpayers with impunity, and continue to give Executives exorbitant bonuses.

They have perpetuated inequality and discrimination in the workplace based on age, the color of one's skin, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation.

They have poisoned the food supply through negligence, and undermined the farming system through monopolization.

They have profited off of the torture, confinement, and cruel treatment of countless animals, and actively hide these practices.

They have continuously sought to strip employees of the right to negotiate for better pay and safer working conditions.

They have held students hostage with tens of thousands of dollars of debt on education, which is itself a human right.

They have consistently outsourced labor and used that outsourcing as leverage to cut workers' healthcare and pay.

They have influenced the courts to achieve the same rights as people, with none of the culpability or responsibility.

They have spent millions of dollars on legal teams that look for ways to get them out of contracts in regards to health insurance.

They have sold our privacy as a commodity.

They have used the military and police force to prevent freedom of the press.

They have deliberately declined to recall faulty products endangering lives in pursuit of profit.

They determine economic policy, despite the catastrophic failures their policies have produced and continue to produce.

They have donated large sums of money to politicians, who are responsible for regulating them.

They continue to block alternate forms of energy to keep us dependent on oil.

They continue to block generic forms of medicine that could save people's lives or provide relief in order to protect investments that have already turned a substantial profit.

They have purposely covered up oil spills, accidents,

faulty bookkeeping, and inactive ingredients in pursuit of profit.

They purposefully keep people misinformed and fearful through their control of the media.

They have accepted private contracts to murder prisoners even when presented with serious doubts about their guilt.

They have perpetuated colonialism at home and abroad.

They have participated in the torture and murder of innocent civilians overseas.

They continue to create weapons of mass destruction in order to receive government contracts.*

To the people of the world,

We, the New York City General Assembly occupying Wall Street in Liberty Square, urge you to assert your power.

Exercise your right to peaceably assemble; occupy public space; create a process to address the problems we face, and generate solutions accessible to everyone.

To all communities that take action and form groups in the spirit of direct democracy, we offer support, documentation, and all of the resources at our disposal.

Join us and make your voices heard!

2. Principles of Solidarity

What follows is a living document that will be revised through democratic process of General Assembly

On September 17, 2011, people from all across the United States of America and the world came to protest the blatant injustices of our times perpetuated by the economic and political elites. On the 17th we as individuals rose up against political disenfranchisement and social and economic injustice. We spoke out, resisted, and successfully occupied Wall Street.

Today, we proudly remain in Liberty Square constituting ourselves as autonomous political beings engaged in non-violent civil disobedience and building solidarity based on mutual respect, acceptance, and love. It is from these reclaimed grounds that we say to all Americans and to the world, Enough! How many crises does it take? We are the 99% and we have moved to reclaim our mortgaged future. Through a direct democratic process, we have come together as individuals and crafted these principles of solidarity, which are points of unity that include but are not limited to:

- Engaging in direct and transparent participatory democracy;

- Exercising personal and collective responsibility;

- Recognizing individuals' inherent privilege and the influence it has on all interactions;

Empowering one another against all forms of oppression;

Redefining how labor is valued;

The sanctity of individual privacy;

The belief that education is human right; and

Endeavoring to practice and support wide application of open source.

We are daring to imagine a new sociopolitical and economic alternative that offers greater possibility of equality. We are consolidating the other proposed principles of solidarity, after which demands will follow.

September 2011

Chronology of events – from Wikipedia

September 17 (day 1) – The first day of the OWS gathering. An estimated 1,000 people^[12] attend on the first day. Officers of the New York City Police Department (NYPD) prohibited protesters from erecting tents, citing loitering rules. Actress and comedienne Roseanne Barr speaks to protesters during the first day of the demonstration.

September 19 (day 3) – The stock market opens on Wall Street for regular business. Keith Olbermann, of Current TV, becomes the first major journalist to focus on the protests. A couple days later, Olbermann criticizes mainstream media (MSM) for failing to cover Occupy Wall Street, saying, “Why isn’t any major news outlet covering this? ... If that’s a Tea Party protest in front of Wall Street ..., it’s the lead story on every network newscast.” Olbermann now devotes every program to the protests, interviewing union leaders and members, eye-witnesses and protestors. Many other major news sources begin to publish articles on the occupation and Occupy Wall Street caught some mainstream media attention across a wide variety of sources.

September 20 (day 4) – Police arrest mask-wearing protesters, using a law dating back to 1845 which bans masked gatherings unless part of “a masquerade party or like entertainment”.

September 22 (day 6) – Local media is reporting that a largely African American crowd of about 2,000 people march down from Union Square, located at 14th Street and Broadway, to Wall Street to protest the execution of Troy Davis. Four people are arrested during the protests.

September 23 (day 7) – The action at Zuccotti Park, now renamed Liberty Square by the protesters, across the street from the One Liberty Plaza building in New York City continues. *The Colbert Report* satirizes the protests and major newspapers including *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* are reporting on the protests.

September 24 (day 8) – At least 80 arrests are made by the NYPD after protesters begin marching uptown, forcing the closure of several streets. Soon after the arrests, videos begin to appear around the web. In particular, public concern is raised by a video released later in the day showing young women being maced by a police officer.

September 25 (day 9) – YouTube discloses that the hacktivist group *Anonymous* uploads a video around 4:30 pm on this day, threatening the NYPD: “If we hear of brutality in the next 36 hours then we will take you down from the internet as you have taken the protesters sic] voices from the airwaves.”

September 26 (day 10) – The name of the police officer who maced some young women on September 24 is revealed as **Anthony Bologna**. The official OWS website claims that this incident occurred without provocation, demanding jail time for Bologna and the resignation of NYC Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly. Noam Chomsky sends a public “strong message of support” to the

organizers of the OWS protests. In the evening hours, filmmaker Michael Moore addresses the crowd at Zuccotti Park.

September 27 (day 11) – An OWS afternoon march ends not at Wall Street but at a rally by postal workers protesting against a five-day delivery week. OWS lends their support to this rally, supporting the belief that this cutback to the delivery week severely harms the postal service and will cause significant job losses. NYC Councilman Charles Barron visits Zuccotti Park addressing those gathered with public support for OWS. Later, Dr. Cornel West speaks to the gathering at the park and opens the daily General Assembly (now meeting at 7 pm each evening). Later it is reported by the official Occupy Wall Street website that “nearly two thousand people gathered to hear Dr. West speak.”

September 28 (day 12) – According to various sources, the board of the local union of the Transport Workers Union of America (TWU Local-100) votes to support Occupy Wall Street. Police Commissioner Kelly publicly states that the NYPD cannot bar protesters from Zuccotti Park since it is a privately owned public park and plaza that is required to stay open 24 hours a day.

September 29 (day 13) – Pulitzer prize-winning reporter Chris Hedges publishes a column in strong support of OWS. TWU Local-100 uses Twitter to urge members to take part in a “massive march and rally” on October 5. There are unsubstantiated claims that the October 5 event is now co-sponsored by another eight labor and community outreach organizations. Meanwhile, protesters in San Francisco attempt to occupy Citibank, Chase, and attempted to

enter a Charles Schwab financial institution, with some media outlets citing OWS as the inspiration for the spread of such protests which are occurring more frequently around the nation.

September 30 (day 14) – More than 1,000 demonstrators, including representatives from various labor organizations, are holding a peaceful march to the NYPD headquarters, a few blocks north of nearby New York City Hall, to protest what they said was a heavy-handed police response the previous week. No arrests are reported.

October 2011

October 1 (day 15) – More than 5,000 people march towards the Brooklyn Bridge, while hundreds march onto its pedestrian area and car lanes, taking over part of the bridge. Traffic into Brooklyn is stopped by the police for roughly two hours. Police split the crowd into two sections, enclosing a few hundred that were on the bridge between two lines of netting and kettling them – slowly closing in and keeping them from moving about. Over 700 arrests are being made, while police call for paddy wagons and buses to transport the arrested, including a *New York Times* reporter who was on the bridge. Some others caught on the bridge are allowed to walk away. The remaining protesters gather that evening in Zuccotti Park.

October 2 (day 16) – Videos are going “viral” showing the police first preventing and then permitting some of the protesters to walk onto the bridge’s main road where they are then arrested on traffic disruption charges:

Protesters started marching up the pedestrian walk way over the bridge while others tried to take the traffic lane. For a few min-

utes officers held the line and then they turned around and led the way up the traffic lane on the Brooklyn Bridge. From what I saw no police told any of the protesters to leave until they created a barricade in front of the march about halfway through the bridge. They then pulled vans and buses up to the back of the group and started arresting everyone.

October 3 (day 17) – Hundreds of protesters in New York City dress as “corporate zombies” and zombie walk past Wall Street with painted faces, carrying fake dollar bills.

October 5 (day 19) – Joined by union members, students, and the unemployed, the demonstration swells to the largest yet with an estimated 5,000 to 15,000 demonstrators marching from lower Manhattan’s Foley Square to Zuccotti Park. The march is mostly peaceful – until after nightfall, when scuffles erupt and some of the younger demonstrators are arrested after they storm barricades blocking them from Wall Street. About 200 people tried to push through barricades and police respond with pepper spray and “kettle” them in with orange netting. Smaller protests continue in cities and on college campuses across the country.

October 6 (day 20) – About 5,000 protesters march in Portland, Oregon. More demonstrations were held in Los Angeles and San Francisco, California; Tampa, Florida; Houston, Austin, Texas, and Salt Lake City. Asked about OWS, U.S. President Barak Obama replied: “I think it expresses the frustrations the American people feel, that we had the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression, huge collateral damage all throughout the country... and yet

you're still seeing some of the same folks who acted irresponsibly trying to fight efforts to crack down on the abusive practices that got us into this in the first place.”

October 8 (day 22) – Protesters were pepper sprayed in Washington, D.C., as they attempted to enter the National Air and Space Museum and one protester pushed a security guard against the wall. The group of “100 to 200” protesters intended to target displays about military drones; one was arrested. One thousand protesters marched from Zuccotti Park to Washington Square Park, located in Manhattan’s Greenwich Village, without incident amid speculation that the protests would relocate there.

October 9 (day 23) – A crowd of approximately 100 protesters gathered in Washington, D.C., outside the White House. *The American Spectator*, a conservative monthly magazine, posted an article by assistant editor Patrick Howley in which he revealed he had infiltrated the group of protesters who had attempted to enter the National Air and Space Museum on October 8. Howley claimed to have helped instigate the events that prompted the museum to close in order to discredit the protest movement. Commenting on the incident, an activist at Occupy Wall Street said that there were “obvious provocateurs” in the movement, and that a committee had been set up to identify and warn others about them. Meanwhile, at Zuccotti Park, Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek addressed the crowd and expressed support for the protests during one of several “open forums” conducted throughout the day around Zuccotti Park.

October 10 (day 24) – NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg suggested

that he did not anticipate an effort by the city to remove the demonstrators. “The bottom line is, people want to express themselves, and as long as they obey the laws, we’ll allow them to,” the mayor told reporters at the start of the city’s 67th annual Columbus Day parade. The official @OccupyWallStreet Twitter account declares, “Bloomberg said we can stay indefinitely! Big win!” Police reported that more than 140 protesters from the Occupy Boston movement were arrested after they ignored warnings to move from a downtown greenway near where they have been camped out for more than a week.

October 13 (day 27) – Mayor Bloomberg told demonstrators they would need to clear Zuccotti Park for it to be cleaned. In response organizers issued a call for cleaning supplies and say they intend to clean the space themselves. The NYPD issued a statement saying that the protesters would no longer be allowed to keep sleeping equipment in the area. Reuters published an article in which they claimed to have found indirect financial links between George Soros and Adbusters, the group which initiated the OWS protests.

October 14 (day 28) – Brookfield Office Properties postponed cleaning its Zuccotti Park. Reuters published an article in which they refuted an earlier claim to have found indirect financial links between George Soros and Adbusters, the group which initiated the OWS protests.

October 15 (day 29) – Thousands of protesters marched through Manhattan to Times Square where they faced its U.S. Armed Forces recruiting station to protest the money being spent on foreign wars

instead of on people in the U.S. struggling with no jobs and no health care. Sparked by the OWS movement, dozens of protests were held in the U.S. and around the world. Most of the protests were peaceful, however many people were arrested across the U.S., largely for refusing to vacate public property. Cornel West was arrested on the steps of the Supreme Court in Washington D.C. protesting about corporate influence in politics. In Rome, the protests turned violent after rioters hijacked a peaceful gathering causing an estimated \$1.4 million of damage.

October 16 (day 30) – President Obama extended support for the protesters. and the White House issued a statement saying Obama is working for the interests of the 99%. The New York City General Assembly Demands Working Group produced a call for a constitutional amendment and national convention to be held July 4, 2012, in Philadelphia. However, it is not representative of OWS or the NYC General Assembly. It is a draft document and will remain as such until issues are resolved regarding the status of the Working Group.

October 17 (day 31) – Freelance journalist, Caitlin Curran, is fired from public radio station WNYC for holding a protest sign and the Occupy Wall Street event at Times Square NYC on October 15. She was covering the event at the time. Her manager fired her for violating editorial standards by participating in a protest she was covering.

October 20 (day 34) – Freelance journalist, Lisa Simeone is fired from her position as a host of Soundprint, a journalistic program

produced for National Public Radio (NPR), for her leadership role in October 2011, an Occupy D.C. organization. Both Soundprint and NPR considered her role to be a violation of journalistic standards.

October 25 (day 39) – Egyptian activists who helped topple former dictator Hosni Mubarak lent their support to the growing Occupy movement, releasing a statement in solidarity with occupiers. In Oakland, California, hundreds of police move against Occupy Oakland protesters, launching teargas, beanbag rounds, and rubber bullets before clearing out an encampment and arresting 85 people. A protest march later in the day resulted in additional use of teargas and rubber bullets. An Iraq War veteran from the U.S. Marines is in critical condition after “being hit in the head by a police projectile.”

October 26 (day 40) – Hundreds of OWS protesters marched near Union Square in support of Iraq War veteran and Occupy Oakland protester Scott Olsen who is in intensive care as a result of a police-fired projectile during the October 25 Occupy Oakland march.

October 27 (day 41) – Jean Quan, mayor of Oakland, said the Occupy Oakland protesters could stay, in the wake of Tuesday’s violent police eviction of the encampment in front of City Hall.

October 29 (day 43) – Tensions flared in Denver, Colorado near the State Capitol when police entered the campsite. There were reports of skirmishes between police and protesters, with more than a dozen arrests. A group of protesters characterized as “thugs” surrounded and pushed over a police motorcycle while the policeman was riding it. The police dispersed the OWS protesters by firing

rounds of pellets filled with pepper spray.

A late October edition of *The Occupied Wall Street Journal*, along with pamphlets on anarchism and the NYC General Assembly

October 30 (day 44) – Police arrested two dozen people in Portland, Oregon, for failing to leave a park when it closed at midnight. Police arrested 38 people in Austin, Texas after they refused to put away food tables at 10 pm. The arrested people contested the legitimacy of the Austin rule since it was issued by City Hall two days earlier and not passed by a City Council vote.

November 2011

November 1 (day 46) – A judge told Tennessee officials on Monday to stop enforcing new rules that have been used to arrest Occupy protesters in Nashville. State Attorney General's Office Senior Counsel Bill Marett announced at the beginning of a hearing before Judge Aleta Trauger that the state would not fight efforts to halt the policy. The judge said she had already decided to grant the restraining order because the curfew was a "clear prior restraint on free speech rights."

November 2 (day 47) – Demonstrations continued in Oakland, California, with a citywide general strike taking place in response to the serious injury sustained by a protester on October 25. Protesters shut down the Port of Oakland, the nation's fifth busiest port.[88] A man was arrested for sexual assault and rape at the NYC OWS encampment.

November 3 (day 48) – Riot police clashed with Occupy Oakland, firing tear gas and flash bang grenades.[90] Over a hundred

protesters were arrested, and including another Iraq veteran who was seriously injured by police.[91][92] Occupy Seattle protesters and police briefly clashed in protests sparked by Chase CEO Jamie Dimon's visit to town. Five protesters were arrested for breaking into the bank, and two police officers sustained minor injuries.

November 5 (day 50) – To participate in both Guy Fawkes Day and Bank Transfer Day, demonstrators protested outside major banks and financial institutions. In the preceding month, over 600,000 people closed their bank accounts and opened accounts with local credit unions.

November 11 (day 56) was called an international day of action. It was a Friday, thus optimal for demonstrations in mainly Islamic countries, with demonstrations in Tunis and Cairo. Occupy Frankfurt made a St. Martin's Day lantern march. One of the day's largest demonstrations may have been in Bologna where students and occupiers demonstrated together. On New York City's Foley Square Queen Mother Dr. Delois Blakely held an emotional speech with a personal appeal to the youth, and Joan Baez appeared to sing for the protesters.

November 14 (day 59) – Occupy Oakland is cleared by police; twenty protestors are arrested. Oakland Mayor Jean Quan cited the eviction as a response to the "tremendous strain" the camp had put the city's resources. The mayor's legal advisor, Dan Siegel, has resigned from his position in protest of the eviction.

November 15 (day 60) – **Occupy Wall Street** At about 1am, NYPD began to clear Zuccotti Park. City Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez is

reported to have been arrested during the eviction, along with seventy other protestors^[101]. The official statement released by Mayor Bloomberg's office explained the purpose of the late-night eviction: "This action was taken at this time of day to reduce the risk of confrontation in the park, and to minimize disruption to the surrounding neighborhood ... [Mayor Bloomberg] [has] become increasingly concerned – as had the park's owner, Brookfield Properties – that the occupation was coming to pose a health and fire safety hazard to the protestors and to the surrounding community". Journalists have been barred from entering immediate area of eviction since the raid began, and Mayor Bloomberg cited this as a way "to protect members of the press," and "to prevent a situation from getting worse". A CBS press helicopter was not allowed into the airspace above the park, which has been interpreted as an effort to limit media coverage of the event. A judge has issued a temporary restraining order in favor of the protestors, requiring Mayor Bloomberg to show cause for eviction. Protesters sporting copies of the court order attempted to reenter the park, but police continued to deny access to square. In response, impromptu general assemblies and meet-ups have started in different locations. Mayor Bloomberg is scheduled to address the court order at 11:30am ET. Occupy Wall Street's statement released in response to the eviction cited exercising their right to assemble and the need to create a "civic space" as essential to changing public discourse. The Mayor's Office released statement states that the right to freedom of speech has not been violated, and furthermore occupying a space with personal property is not included in First

Amendment rights; but the Right to Assemble was not addressed in the statement. 5,554 books at The People's Library are confiscated.

Occupy Cal gathered over a thousand people at a rally at Sproul Hall plaza.

Occupy DC staged a sit-in at the DC headquarters of Brookview Properties, which administers New York City's Zuccotti Park.

Occupy UC Davis held a rally on the campus which was attended by approximately 2000 people. Later, about 400 individuals occupied the Administration building and held a General Assembly in the space.

Occupy Seattle rallied and marched downtown, police clashed with protestors, used pepper-spray, and arrested six.

November 16 (day 61) – Arrests took place in Portland, Berkeley, San Francisco (95 protestors arrested that night), St Louis and Los Angeles.

November 17 (Day 62) – Occupy Wall Street saw crowds of more than 30,000 marching in the streets of New York City. Crowds assembled in and around Zuccotti Park, Union Square, Foley Square, the Brooklyn Bridge, and other locations through the city.

Occupy Boston – Judge issues a restraining order preventing police from evicting protestors.

Occupy Cal – Students at UC Berkeley maintained their re-established encampment.

Occupy Dallas – Camp evicted, 18 arrests.

Occupy Davis and **Occupy UC Davis** – Students continued their occupation of the administration building and protestors erected

tents on the campus quad.

Occupy Los Angeles – at least 30 were arrested. Protestors occupied Bank of America plaza.

Occupy Milwaukee – Occupy protestors shut down the North Avenue bridge.

Occupy Portland – Police in Portland used pepper spray on protestors there. At least 25 arrested on the Steel Bridge.

Occupy Seattle Occupy protestors marched on University Bridge, blocked traffic.

Occupy Spokane – permit issued permitting protestors to camp.

Occupy St. Louis – Approximately 1,000 marched from the Kiener Plaza occupy site to Martin Luther King Bridge, where 14 were arrested for blocking an onramp, and later in the afternoon a group temporarily occupies the old Municipal Courts Building adjacent to city hall and unveils large banners proclaiming “Occupy Everything”.

November 18 (Day 63) – Police stage 2:00 am raid at Occupy Cal. Campus police raid the OccupyDavis encampment in the morning, pepper-spraying multiple students with no provocation In an article “An Uprising With Plenty of Potential” in the New York Times, James B. Stewart suggests that “The issues that spawned the movement – income inequality, money in politics and Wall Street’s influence – were being drowned out by debates over personal hygiene, noise and crime.”

November 19 (Day 64) – Former Philadelphian Police Captain

Ray Lewis was arrested at Zuccotti park. Protesters at the University of California, Davis, were pepper sprayed, prompting outrage. Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House, suggests OWS protesters “Go Get a Job Right after You Take a Bath.”

November 23 (Day 68) – While giving a speech in New Hampshire, President Obama was interrupted by “The Peoples Mic” by Occupy Wall Street protesters. They said, “Mr. President, Over four thousand peaceful protesters have been arrested.” before the crowd started chanting “Obama!” over them. Afterwards, a protester handed the president a small piece of paper which read “Mr. President: Over 4000 peaceful protesters have been arrested. While bankers continue to destroy the American economy. You must stop the assault on our 1st amendment rights. Your silence sends a message that police brutality is acceptable. Banks got bailed out. We got sold out.”

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The Author

Danny Schechter is a writer, television producer, and independent filmmaker who also speaks about Media Issues. He is the editor of (now Mediachannel1.org), the global media issues site, and blogs daily at newsdissector.com (.net). His blog was named Blog Of The Year by the Hunter College Media Department of the City University of New York in 2009.

He is the author of *The Crime Of Our Time* (2010, Disinfo Books), a call for the prosecution of financial criminals. He has two earlier books on the financial crisis: *Plunder: Investigating our Economic Calamity* (Cosimo, 2008) and *Squeezed* (Coldtype.net 2007). He has also directed two films on the subject, *In Debt We Trust* (2006) and *Plunder: The Crime Of Our Time* (2010).

His other titles on the media and the Iraq War include *When News Lies: Media Complicity and the Iraq War* (Select Books, 2006), *Embedded: Weapons Of Mass Deception: How The Media Failed To Cover The Iraq War* (Prometheus Books, October 2003); *Media Wars: News At A Time of Terror* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); *The More You Watch, The Less You Know* (Seven Stories Press), and *News Dissector: Passions, Pieces and Polemics* (Akashic Books and Electron Press).

He has been the recipient of many journalism awards, including two National News Emmys and was the recipient of the Society of Professional Journalists' 2001 Award for Excellence in Documentary Journalism.

He has Produced and Directed many TV specials and documentary films, including Barack Obama: Peoples President, on the election of 2008, and served as a contributing director of Viva Madiba – A Salute To Nelson Mandela On His 90th Birthday. He was also a contributing director of The Journalist And The Jihadi: The Death Of Daniel Pearl (HBO); Counting On Democracy, about the electoral fiasco in Florida, Narrated by Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee; the post 9/11 film We Are Family (2002), shown at the Sundance Film Festival; Nkosi: A Voice of Africa's AIDS Orphans (2001) Narrated by Danny Glover; A Hero for All: Nelson Mandela's Farewell (1999); Beyond Life: Timothy Leary Lives (1997); Sowing Seeds Reaping Peace, Prisoners of Hope Robben Island Reunion (1995), Co-directed by Academy Award Winner Barbara Kopple); Countdown to Freedom: Ten Days that Changed South Africa (1994), Narrated by James Earl Jones and Alfre Woodard; Sarajevo Ground Zero (1993); The Living Canvas (1992), Narrated by Billy Dee Williams; Beyond JFK: The Question of Conspiracy (1992), Co-Directed by Marc Levin and Barbara Kopple); Give Peace a Chance (1991); Mandela in America (1990); The Making of Sun

City (1987); and Student Power (1968).

Schechter is Co-Founder and Executive Producer of Globalvision (www.globalvision.org), a New York-based television and film production company, now in its 24th year. He Founded and Executive-Produced the series South Africa Now, and co-produced the series Rights & Wrongs: Human Rights Television.

He has specialized in investigative reporting, financial journalism, and producing programming about the interface between human rights, journalism, popular music and society.

His career began as “The News Dissector”, at Boston’s leading Rock station, WBCN. Later, Schechter was a Producer for ABC NEWS 20/20, where he produced 50 segments, won two national Emmys, and was nominated for two others. A Cornell University graduate, he received his Master’s degree from the London School of Economics, and an Honorary Doctorate from Fitchburg College. He was a Neiman Fellow in Journalism at Harvard, where he also taught in 1969.

After college, he was a full time Civil Rights worker, and then Communications Director of the Northern Student Movement, and worked as a community organizer in a Saul Alinsky-style War on Poverty program. Then, moving from the streets to the suites, Schechter served as an Assistant to the Mayor of Detroit in 1966 on a Ford

Foundation grant. Schechter joined the start-up staff at CNN as a producer, based in Atlanta.

Schechter has reported from 63 countries, and lectured at many schools and universities. He was an Adjunct Professor at the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University. Schechter's writing has appeared in leading newspapers and magazines including the *The Nation*, *Newsday*, *Boston Globe*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Media Studies Journal*, *Detroit Free Press*, *Village Voice*, *Tikkun*, *Z*, and many others. His reports on Occupy Wall Street appear on *AlJazeera.com* and many other well-known web sites.

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Danny Schechter writes the *Newsdissector.com* (.net) blog daily.

For more information on his latest film and book:

Plunderthecrimeofourtime.com

See also InDebtWeTrust.org

Follow Danny Schechter on Facebook and at

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"Our movement – leaderless and leaderful – is a soulful expression of moral outrage"

– Prof Cornel West, Princeton University



The author at Wall Street. Photo: Joyce Ravid

"It's So Not Over" is the new slogan of Occupy Wall Street.

DANNY SCHECHTER, the "News Dissector," a veteran journalist, filmmaker and participant in many social movements, began covering Occupy Wall Street for Al Jazeera and other leading websites, international TV News programs and Progressive Radio Network show. **OCCUPY** collects his essays, blog reports and movement documents.

As the filmmaker behind "In Debt We Trust" (2006) and "Plunder: The Crime of Our Time" (2010), Danny Schechter has specialized in exposing Wall Street crime in three books and many reports. He says, "This is the movement we have been waiting for to 'fight the power.' Even as debt strangled millions, and unemployment rose alongside foreclosures, economic issues only remained fodder for boring pundits and self-styled experts. There was no activist response. **Until now.**"

Schechter explains, "Occupy Wall Street has a way of touching you personally with its gutsy honesty and democratic spirit. Yet, I was not always uncritical. I want it to succeed but I'm also aware of its many contradictions and internal conflicts."

OCCUPY provides the News Dissector's in-depth assessment of a global revolt in the making.