

The 'Occupy' demonstrations that began on Wall Street, then Oakland and elsewhere in the US, are now part of a Global movement, the immediate causes of which go back to the Arab revolutions of early 2011. We have assembled reports, largely from Marxist-Humanist participants, in cities in the US and the UK -- Editors

'Occupy Wall Street' Goes Global

The 2011 Arab revolutions targeted economic oppression as much as political oppression, focusing not only on real democracy, but also on disparities of wealth, on youth unemployment, and on economic corruption. In the early months of 2011, this already had an effect in the USA, as seen in the Wisconsin protests to defend labor rights against a very conservative state government. Over the spring and summer, political protests that targeted economic inequality and oppression sprung up in various countries, especially Spain and Israel, while London experienced serious rioting by urban poor youth.

The Wall Street protests are in the context of the above events, and an outgrowth of them. What is new is that in the fall of 2011 these types of grievances -- over economic inequality, unemployment, money politics, and criminality in the finance sector -- have finally found a vehicle through which to express themselves in the Occupation movement. The 2011 Arab revolutions, especially in Egypt, showed the world that it is possible for idealistic young people to build a movement, to gain mass support, and then to actually overthrow a government. The sense of hope, the sense that radical change is really possible, was the precipitating factor for the Occupy Wall Street movement, which has succeeded far beyond what its initial organizers hoped.

The Occupy movement involves mainly younger people, most of them with university education, but not from elite backgrounds. This group has seen its own economic situation decline drastically in the last few years. Many of the core people in the movement have socialist or anarchist beliefs, but its reach among young people is far wider than those relatively small circles. The Occupiers have created a youth movement -- or at least a predominantly youth movement -- that has great appeal also to far larger sectors of the population, not only the working class but also large sectors of the middle class as well. This is a very new phenomenon for the USA. Previous youth movements have not had such wide support from the working classes or the general population. The fact that they

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were able to shut down the port in Oakland, the fifth largest one in the USA, on Nov. 2, shows that this is a movement that has already, in less than two months, gained some serious labor support, well beyond its largely youthful base.

The Democratic and Republican factions of neoliberalism now have a third force with which to contend: a new youth and labor movement that is considerably to the left of either. Moreover, some within this movement are questioning the capitalist system itself.

This is a very new situation for the USA, a type of mass leftist politics not seen since the 1960s.

As the momentum of 'Anti-Capitalist' mobilizations gather pace we present a number of reports from our international correspondence, beginning with Miriam Qamar's from Oakland.

Kevin Anderson and David Black

OAKLAND

4 November 2011

I have been pretty plugged-in to Occupy Oakland and more generally work around police brutality and other forms of state violence in Oakland and San Francisco, so I thought I would give a brief report back of my analysis/experience. Before the raid (on what we now refer as the Oakland Commune), there was criticism in regards to the space retaining a political integrity and direction. However, the self-organizing was impressive, with a free school/library, a kitchen, first aid, etc. General Assemblies had been convened almost every evening and the night before the raid we were starting to adopt more tangible proposals (which could only passed with a 90% consensus) such as working with parents and school workers in an action to stop the closure of 5 Oakland schools. The Tuesday night after the raid, people reconvened and took back the camp after being hit with tear gas ([note the tear gas canisters are exported from the same manufacturer that provides for Israel](#)), paint balls, stun grenades, and rubber bullets. A comrade arrested that night and taken (as overflow) to Santa Rita jail, recalled to me being beat by 4 correctional officers and than being visited by ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) several times after his release. The space was successfully reclaimed and workshops and committees meet as part of an ongoing schedule (<http://www.occupyoakland.org/>). The General Assembly the day after this initial confrontation with police, voted on a General Strike.

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We had a teach-in on the historical context of what a General Strike had looked like in Oakland in 1946, where transportation workers had been instrumental. The outreach effort was pretty well done prior to the strike, and given the support of the ILWU ([International Longshore and Warehouse Union](#)) Local 10 in the past, there was an effort made from that end to encourage workers to not cross the picket line. They ended up shutting down their own port in the day, and when people marched to the docks that evening, we stopped that shift too. There were so many people I cannot fathom the number but I think 10,000 is probably an understatement. There was an anti-capitalist march that circled the larger downtown area at 2 pm that day. We had a good red flag contingent going with signs like "Seize the means of production" :) There was minimal police presence (visible presence at least) throughout the day. Around 11:30 pm, another action was taken up (that had been passed in a previous [General Assembly](#) :) to occupy bank owned property across from the plaza where the occupy Oakland commune was. I was in favor of this as it was a directed action, and reclaiming bank owned property seemed like part of a larger end goal and strategy. However, there are always agent provocateurs, opportunist or insurrectionist forces that come into play and deviate from a strategic occupation. There have been divisive moments in political organizing in oakland both ideologically and tactically, especially between black nationalists and anarchists, but a lot of work has been done to reconcile this, as I believe people have a general understanding that when the cops show up it is an effort to control the narrative and shape the situation regardless of what is happening at the time. Anyway, the police came with 8 rows of 60 cops, let out the tear gas and all, arrested about 70 people, and nearly raided the camp again. People held their ground, fought back, and will reconvene for a General Assembly tomorrow night at 7 pm. Now the real organizing work has to be done, with engaging the militant allies we have in the union if we want to reclaim the port again (while simultaneously challenging the union economism), building trust with local small business owners and workers so to not lose the support of the community despite the property destruction from last night, and maybe occupy one of the 5 schools that Oakland shut down last week. In all, Occupy Oakland is a very dynamic but organized space, with a growing political consciousness. It is assertively anti-capitalist, therefore expanding the narrow 'corporate greed', 'rebuild the middle class' rhetoric which seems to dominate many other Occupy(Wall street) protests. There are committees working towards expanding the discourse even further to better encompass internationalism, a decolonize framework, foreign occupation and aid, war, as well as highlight how people of color and immigrant communities should be at the forefront of an analysis of economic disparities.

DENVER

7 November 2011

For the last three Saturdays I have taken part in the Occupy Denver protests and marches against the growth of immoral and profit-driven inequalities around the country and throughout the world. Upwards to two thousand of us marched through the streets of downtown Denver. The weather for the Saturday rallies and marches has been great, but during the week the Occupy Denver “Occupation” Protestors have to deal with major snow storms. These next statements are from occupydenver.org; “We're not going anywhere!” Tents stood for barely an hour when Denver Police ordered the removal of all shelter from the snow storm. Disabled veteran William Hall was forcibly removed from his tent by Denver Police Department (DPD) officers and dragged off for arrest. There is a continued heavy Denver Police presence at Civic Center Park, and DPD officers have vowed to use their resources to destroy an igloo built by Occupy Denver at 11 PM MST.' This threat and several other police actions were carried out by the DPD.

DPD is known for its brutality toward protestors. During the last Democratic National Convention, the DPD allowed their horses to trample a protesting Iraq War Veteran, seriously injuring him. Of course we see the same treatment of protestors in other cities, e.g. Oakland where Iraq War Veteran, Scott Olsen was critically injured by a tear gas canister fired by the Oakland Police and hitting Scott Olsen in the head.

I believe police brutality is inevitable in a society that allows the torture and murder of political prisoners and prefers the assassinations of American citizens by unmanned drones to due process under the law. This leads to the empowerment of the police, which is a dangerous development, especially for existing society. All the major rebellions from “Watts 1965” through the recent revolts in France and England have been instigated by police actions.

The last two Saturday Occupy Denver marches were routed down 17th Street in downtown Denver, a man made canyon where all the regional “banksters” have their skyscraper office buildings. It was definitely exhilarating to hear our chant “‘Banks’ got bailed out, ‘We’ got sold out” echo back to us in what is literally a corridor of corporate power. Some of the other chants we recited that I know are used at most other Occupy Wall Street

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(OWS) Protests, “‘Whose’ street, ‘Our’ street”, “‘We are ‘all’ Scott Olsen”, “‘We’ ‘are’ the 99 Percent”. The march stopped briefly at the Denver Federal Reserve Building, where we chanted “The ‘Fed’ is enemy number ‘One’” and at predatory financial institutions e.g. Wells Fargo, Citibank and Chase where an impromptu assembly urged customers to transfer their funds to local credit unions. This was an action to coincide with the bank boycott known as “Bank Transfer Day”. The march concluded back where it started at the Greek Amphitheatre in Civic Center Park with a General Assembly. [General Assemblies \(GA’s\) are held twice a day.](#)

Occupy Denver was endorsed by the Denver Area Labor Federation, AFL CIO; occupydenver.org. The OWS Movement is just beginning in my opinion and it’s too early to tell how it will self-develop. Recently, leather workers in Turkey temporarily occupied a factory in Istanbul. Is this an indication of what is to come, the occupation of factories and work places? Are we going to revisit what happened in Argentina, but hopefully on a higher level?

Numerous topics and issues are taken up by the GA’s which are communicated between various OWS Occupations. The following list includes most, but not all issues; <http://www.nycga.net/resources/declaration/>. The topic I want to close with is the desire for what OWS calls “horizontal” Democracy, or what is usually referred to as direct or participatory democracy. I believe the OWS Occupations are going to challenge us in the International Marxist-Humanist Organization to follow through with our development of the “Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy” for which Peter Hudis’ forthcoming book ‘Marx’s Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism’ will provide an essential contribution.

Dale Parsons

LONDON

31 October 2011

One thing leads to another, often in unexpected ways. As far as I know, no one planned in advance to set up camp outside St. Paul’s cathedral. It just happened to be the closest accessible piece of land to the financial district of the City of London. However, it had the effect of drawing the Church of England (already divided over gay rights) into the controversy. The cathedral authorities are seeking an injunction that would require the protesters to leave (while refusing to say whether they would sanction a forced removal).

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However, the days when the Church of England was described as "the Tory Party at prayer" are long gone, and there are many in this and other churches who are sympathetic to the protests and in particular opposed to a forced removal. Two of the cathedral's own clerics have resigned in protest. Some Christian groups, including the Student Christian Movement, have said they will form a "prayer cordon" to protect the camp from eviction. So the movement is widening.

Richard Abernethy

London

29 October 2011

The current occupying of St Pauls - some 200 tents - has been highlighted by three events: one, by the resignation of two senior clerics who disagreed with moves to evict the protestors; two, moves for a court injunction to be implemented by City of London and the Church authorities; and three, (not so well known or publicised) was the on incident of a raid Thursday night by City police on the Kurdish tent where some of the inhabitants were harassed and arrested -- the only one tent out of 200 to get such treatment. Whilst on the surface the vast number of the protestors appear to be liberals/greens, mainly interested in making "capitalism more human", underlying this a far more radical complexion, as displayed in the many hand printed banners and notices posted, striking a more direct anti-capitalist stance. The general meetings/assemblies have been relatively mild in contrast. Both this site and that of the Finsbury Square encampment are linked up with the wider international movement. Here it does not appear to be effectively translated to the Trades Union or wider left movement, but there may be a possibility that this may well be effectively linked politically to the day of the forthcoming 30 November public sector workers' strike and demonstration.

George Shaw

CHICAGO

25 October 2011

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On Saturday I got to spend a good deal of time at the Occupy Chicago site and protest in downtown Chicago, part of a national (and indeed worldwide) movement that began with the Occupy Wall Street Movement in New York City. The corner of LaSalle and Jackson, in the heart of the financial district, has been occupied for some 3 weeks now, and hundreds of youth and activists from around the Chicago area are taking part. It is a genuine movement with no group or groups in control, even though it need not be said, the various leftist groups have descended upon it. But the movement is far too broad and large to be dominated by any particular group, and the range of opinions from those I spoke with ranged from left of center moderates to liberals to radicalized youth who are quite disgusted with the way the country is going and want to do something about it. Indeed, one of the most impressive aspects of the event on Saturday especially was the number of home made signs, often made on cardboard by students and youth, many of them saying they are disgusted with capitalism.

Several thousand attended the march on Saturday, where an effort was made to set up a permanent encampment in Grant Park, site of the protests at the 1968 democratic convention. Dozens were arrested, and this time (175 were arrested a week before) the police acted rather brutally, holding many of those arrested for at least 24 hours. But that is not going to tamp down this movement; despite the onset of winter, I have every reason to think this movement will continue for some time.

Peter Hudis

OAKLAND

Oct 25th, 2011 8:00 AM

"The camp looks like a tornado went through it. Everything is destroyed, and it is currently occupied by hundreds of police."

IndyBay spoke with Tim, an organizer with Occupy Oakland, at 7:45 am on Tuesday, just a few hours after numerous police agencies raided the encampment, using rubber bullets, tear gas and flash-bang grenades against activists, before arresting dozens of them.

This is what he said:

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"Around 2 am word spread that riot police were massing in around the area where Occupy Oakland has been for more than two weeks. Hundreds of people gathered and began to make non-violent barricades at all the entrances to the plaza.

At about 4:30 am, riot police appeared on all corners of the encampment. There were roughly 500 to 700 riot police in total.

The entire plaza was completely barricaded on all sides, with palates, trash cans, chairs, a gigantic christmas wreath, police barricades from a neighboring street.

Occupiers began chanting 'go home' as they always do when police show up at Occupy Oakland, but it quickly became clear that there was an overwhelming number of police from at least four different jurisdictions.

As people continued to chant and fell back within the barricade, off of the street, the police announced that we would be arrested within the encampment. They said [they'd use force to disperse demonstrators within] five minutes, and within a minute they fired the first rounds of flash-bang grenades and rubber bullets, and then tear gas into the camp, hitting and injuring multiple people.

At this point much of the crowd began to flee through an area the police had opened up to flush the crowd out. All those who remained were arrested.

We know of roughly 70 arrests and multiple injuries, none of them extremely serious, but many for sure.

At this time people are still standing up to the police line. The camp looks like a tornado went through it. Everything is destroyed, and it is currently occupied by hundreds of police.

We're asking for public condemnations of police repression of the occupy movement in Oakland and we're also saying that people should re-converge at 14th and Madison at the public library for an emergency demonstration at 4 pm today (Tuesday)."

Jesse S

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DENVER

22 October 2011

There is a lot of communication between various occupations that has resulted in their sharing common features. At the same time, there are unique features to each location e.g. the near fatal incident At Occupy Oakland where an Iraq War Veteran, Scott Olsen, was hit in the head with what was believed to be a tear gas canister. Scott Olsen remains in critical condition at an area hospital, and this incident has only strengthened the Occupy Oakland Movement.

Last Saturday in Denver, approximately 1000 of us marched through the streets in downtown Denver in unseasonably warm weather, but now the Occupy Denver Protestors are having to deal with the first major snow storm of the season. These next statements are from occupydenver.org; "We're not going anywhere!" "Tents stood for barely an hour when Denver Police ordered the removal of all shelter from the snow storm. Disabled veteran William Hall was forcibly removed from his tent by DPD officers and dragged off for arrest. There is a continued heavy Denver Police presence at Civic Center Park, and DPD officers have vowed to use their resources to destroy an igloo built by Occupy Denver at 11 PM MST.'

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