

OCCUPY

MAGAZINE



YOU CAN'T KILL AN IDEA

**TOO BIG
TO IGNORE**

99%

STRONG

block by block
city by city

OCCUPY NOVA SCOTIA

OCCUPY MAGAZINE NOVEMBER 2011
A PUBLICATION OF OCCUPY NOVA SCOTIA

Warm greetings from Parade Square in K'jipuktuk, otherwise known as Halifax, Nova Scotia.

We are excited and thankful to be able to bring you issue #2 of Occupy Magazine. Occupy NS has had the good fortune of being relatively free from state-approved harassment and violence. The community-at-large has also been extremely gracious in providing for the movement. This calm in the storm has allowed us the freedom and luxury of preparing and presenting a platform from which to disseminate ideas and news.

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Other movements have not been so fortunate in their dealings with the state, and we stand in solidarity with them. It is to them, and all of the 99%, that we make this humble offering.

The articles contained within this issue were selected by the Magazine Working Group. Anyone was, and is, welcome to join and participate at daily meetings of the MWG. The articles that the MWG selected were then presented to the General Assembly at Parade Square for approval. We, the editors of Occupy Magazine, thus perceive that the contents of this magazine were reached through consensus. We are eager to work through a process of horizontal non-leadership, and encourage participation and feedback from all so-inclined.

Our vision for the magazine is that it become a reliable tool for information dissemination relevant to the global occupy movement. While we believe that the internet has been a powerful tool towards this purpose within our movement, we also see the need to alleviate the dependence upon it for critical information exchange. We have seen the attempts to suppress and shut down internet communication among activists. That's why we are in the process of developing a robust and expansive network of occupation libraries that are able to assist with the distribution of the magazine via the postal service. In this way the personal bonds between the members of our international movement will be strengthened. And we will even be able to reach out to those people who have been excluded from the benefits and privileges available to us in the digital age. At the same time we keep close a message that was passed to us from our brothers and sisters in Egypt which is displayed at the Occupy Nova Scotia Library, "If your government shuts down the internet, shut down the government."

Occupy Magazine is constantly seeking input in the form of articles, artwork, and feedback. If you have anything you would like to see in future issues, please send all submissions and ideas to occupymagazine@gmail.com

We are also very much seeking input in the form of weekly updates from global movements. K'jipuktuk is Oakland, Oakland is K'jipuktuk.

Wela'lin, Thank You, Merci,

Miles Howe
James Green
Editors
Occupy Magazine

Financial Statement

We do our best to provide Occupy Magazine freely to anyone who desires a copy. The initial run of 500 copies of Issue #1 are long-gone, and the eagerness in which the local community responded to our maiden production was astounding. While we have received generous support in producing our magazine exclusively with volunteer labor, there are still many costs associated with our activities. Since we are a working group under the umbrella of Occupy Nova Scotia, all funds we raise go directly to the finance team who then create a budget proposal for their distribution among all of our working groups. By supporting us, you support our ability to continue to engage in non-violent protest as well as all the activities associated with it. It is challenging to justify the spending of money on food for the mind, when we are struggling to provide people here with food for their bellies. But we at OM believe firmly that without powerful intellectual defense against the many, well-funded, media propaganda machines, our movement will fail.

Cover Photo by Miles Howe
Design by Jonathan Rotsztain

National Guardsman Supports Occupy Wall Street 100%

By Pham Binh

ZNet

Sunday, October 30, 2011

An active-duty black National Guardsman showed in uniform up in Liberty Plaza less than two days after Oakland police brutalized a U.S. marine Iraq war veteran in the crackdown on Occupy Oakland. He allowed people to take his photo and quite a few people made it a point to personally thank him and shake his hand.

This is remarkable. It is against military regulations for active-duty troops to attend demonstrations in uniform, although standing in a park surrounded by dozens of tarps and tents in the middle of a cold rainy afternoon without a sign or banner in sight probably does not count. During protests against the Afghan and/or Iraq wars, active-duty personnel who attended them made it a point not to appear in uniform because of these rules.

"I support this movement 100%," he told me. He would have come down before today if he hadn't been busy with National Guard training. He was bothered by what he described as the government's "imbalanced" approach to fiscal issues, namely massive tax cuts for the 1% while social services for the 99% saw their funding slashed to the bone. Shelters for homeless teenagers faced cuts, and he feared what kind of trouble these kids would get into with nowhere to go and no one to turn to. As we spoke, a young Hispanic guy asked him if the military would help him get his G.E.D. (the equivalent of a high school diploma) and how the training was.

I asked the Guardsman why he joined the military. He said he chose the National Guard so that he could go to school part time (he committed to six years of part-time duty so that he could attend school at the same time). When I asked him about the military's health care benefits he chuckled and told me that he had to pay into the system known as Tricare. He noted the irony of being forced to pay into the military's health care system when it was his life and limb that would be at risk in a future military deployment, meanwhile Congress had no problem voting to give themselves raises every year.

British activist Richard Seymour reacted to the crackdown in Oakland by asking, "How can you uphold your right to protest when that right is gainsayed by tear gas, rubber bullets, and bean bag rounds?"

U.S. Marine sergeant Shamar Thomas showed us how a few weeks ago when he single-handedly shamed and stopped 30 cops with flex cuffs on their belts from arresting peaceful Occupy protesters at a massive Times Square demonstration.

A thinking soldier, a soldier with a conscience is the 1%'s worst nightmare. If the rank and file of the U.S. military become aware of the fact that they too are the 99%, they won't have enough cops in the country to stop us.

Pham Binh's articles have been published by Asia Times Online, Znet, Counterpunch, and The Independent. All of his writings on Occupy Wall Street and other topics can be found at www.planetanarchy.net.



calamitiesofnature.com © 2011 Tony Piro



Why they protest

Against all odds, the Occupy Nova Scotia group is demonstrating values that we'll all need to find justice

By **Tim Bousquet**

The Coast

Thursday, October 27, 2011

Judging by my Twitter feed, the Occupy Nova Scotia demonstrators are annoying some people. "Canada didn't have American-type financial deregulation, so the protests are misplaced," is a typical tweet dismissing the group camped out in Grand Parade (and who mayor Peter Kelly is threatening to evict). It's true that Canada didn't follow the insane deregulation route charted out by the US, but that wasn't because Canadian banks are somehow more virtuous than their American brethren. Indeed, if you go back and read the business press of the 1990s, you'll see Canadian bankers and their political supporters, including Stephen Harper, were demanding that Canada deregulate the industry, and it was only the stalwart opposition of Jean Chrétien that prevented that from happening.

More to the point, while Canadian banks weren't able to directly join the \$620 trillion global trade in derivatives—that's 10 times the actual money supply in all the world—Canada was making many other policy decisions that contributed to what journalist Chris Hedges calls the "corporate coup." And in terms of shifting wealth from working people to the wealthiest one percent over the past two decades, Canada is third, after only the US and Australia—see a detailed analysis of Canada's horrid economic record via thecoast.ca/CanadasOnePercent.

While the richest are doing just fine, Canadian workers' pension funds have been gutted, students graduating with huge debt loads face bleak employ-

ment opportunities and those lucky enough to have jobs rightly fret about the future as the federal government attacks unions at every turn. And on the bottom edge of society sits a growing number of the completely dispossessed, some of whom are camped out in Grand Parade.

Critics of the occupation condemn the demonstrators for lacking detailed explanations of their position and understandings of the world of global finance, but since when do people need to be certified with a PhD in economics or political science before they are given the right to protest? And let's remember that most of our economic and political elite actually created the problem in the first place, breaking the global economy. Why should we trust anyone with such credentials?

To be sure, along with an incredibly knowledgeable and dedicated core, the Occupy NS group includes street kids, some homeless people and a very few people with mental health issues. It's not likely everyone on Grand Parade can maneuver through an academic debate on economic policy issues, but so what? Their very presence is giving testimony that's better than a thousand textbooks: *We matter, damn it, and our society has failed us.*

Having spent some time at Occupy NS, I've come away with profound respect for the enterprise. Even the most disenfranchised of the group, who have legitimate reason to be most angry, have committed themselves to non-violence and are

working through the process of understanding the consensus decision-making process. With little outside help and a lot working against them, and using only their own resourcefulness and sense of justice, they've created a workable community that provides basic health care and a decent meal for all, that takes a responsibility for its most vulnerable, that has shared purpose. They're demonstrating values that are eluding the larger society; they should be proud of themselves.

And what about the rest of us: Are we proud of ourselves? Are we doing the best we can to object and stand up for ourselves in a broken economy? Or do we just put up with it, getting along to get along with an unjust system?

I met an engaging young woman involved with Occupy NS who had parked herself in Granville Mall to do outreach to NSCAD students, stressing the need for solidarity in the face of a common struggle. She's right, of course, and the rest of us can learn from her—we're in this together. The powerless have thrown down the gauntlet: How do we do right by each other?

The one percent has succeeded in coming to the trough time and again, demanding that the 99 percent bail out their false economy with ever deeper austerity, raided retirement funds and broken wage contracts. We could keep acquiescing, or we could learn from the Occupy folks and say enough is enough.



“Letting Us Stay”

Occupy NS Participants Praise and Denounce the Police

By Hillary Lindsay
Halifax Media Coop
Thursday, October 20, 2011

One of the first speakers at the Occupy Nova Scotia rally in Parade Square last night had a lot of people to thank. "Thank you everyone for braving the rain, thank you for the people who are staying here, thank you to those who are making food, building tents, and for just everything. This is amazing. Thank you," exclaimed Wilf on day five of a protest that has seen dozens of people camping in downtown Halifax.

But it was the police that Wilf singled out for praise. "The main reason I'm here is to thank someone very important, and that is the police," he said, to which many in the crowd of supporters responded with cheers and clapping. "The reason I'm saying that is first of all, we're still here aren't we?"

This praise did not sit well with Mi'kmaq elder Billy Lewis, who spoke later in the evening. "To consider [the police] our friends and allies, that'd be a mistake," he said in an interview.

In his speech, Lewis, a supporter of Occupy NS, addressed the thank-you to police and the blanket positivity some of the speakers were using to describe the Occupy Movement, a movement that started in Wall Street and has spread around the world.

"There's a tendency to want to keep positive," said Lewis. "But I'm sorry folks, if someone is screwing you around and your'e not yelling, you're doing something wrong." Lewis used to work on the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver, an area where many Aboriginal women have gone missing or been murdered. "Many of my friends are now dead

[because of] the people we just praised not doing their jobs."

The police exist "to protect the one per cent," writes Harsha Walia in a letter to a movement whose chant "We are the ninety-nine per cent" can now be heard at rallies across North America. In A Letter to Occupy Together Movement, Walia, a Vancouver-based activist and writer, criticizes Occupy organizers who have actively cooperated with police. "The police have a long history of repression of social movements," she writes. "Marginalized people, such as those who are homeless, Indigenous, youth of colour, non-status, and trans people also routinely experience police abuse and do not feel that the police serve and protect their interests."

Indeed, says Lewis, "The idea of the ninety-nine per cent homogenizes the ninety-nine, as if we're all coming from the same place and on the same side."

"Some of that ninety-nine per cent are working for the other side," said Lewis in his speech, and he puts the police in that category.

"The whole system is geared to enforcing the hierarchical or corporate model," says Lewis, and the police are a part of that model. "Even if someone lower down on the chain gives us an assurance [of safety] that doesn't matter when someone higher up gives an order." Once that happens, says Lewis,

"They won't be our allies or our friends." Tom Smith, who doesn't want to give his real name because he's "afraid of the police" is part of Occupy Nova Scotia and has been camping out in Parade Square for several nights. He acknowledges that, so

far, officers have been friendly, but has seen police in Halifax act very differently towards protestors at demonstrations in the past. During a march against the G8 development ministers meeting in the spring of 2010, for example, he witnessed mounted police use their horses to push protestors back, a move he says threatened the safety of those participating in the march.

Smith says that so far, the occupation has done little to disturb business as usual in downtown Halifax. The police "will quickly intervene if we disturb business as usual," he says.

"I think it's naive to think the powers that be will give up what they have without a fight," says Smith. "And I don't think the people here are ready for that."

Despite his concerns, Smith believes something amazing is happening in Parade Square. "I'm working really hard to keep this place going, cause I have a lot of hope in it," he says. "People are talking in groups about issues that are important."

"I am enjoying this extremely peaceful moment of this global movement," says Smith. "We're building something right now." For Smith, an exciting part of the movement is about people taking their own power back, and taking control of their own lives.

The notion of autonomy is one echoed in Walia's writing. "We must also learn to rely on ourselves, not the police, to keep ourselves safe and to hold ground when they are ordered to clear us out."



VS



WORKERS

Postal Workers Occupy TD Bank on Bay Street

By Mick Sweetman
Rabble

Sunday, October 30, 2011

An estimated 900 union and community protesters occupied the intersection of King and Bay streets in the heart of Toronto's financial district Thursday afternoon.

Carrying a banner stating, "Capitalism doesn't work for workers. CUPW-STTP" and signs reading "Postal workers are part of the 99%," protesters marched up Bay Street from the Westin Harbour Castle hotel where postal workers from across the country are attending their union's national convention.

Denis Lemelin, national president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) said, "That's why we're all here today, we came with a message for the one per cent. Regarding the centre of power in the financial district, we came with a message and we say it loud, 'You are wrong!'"

A group of five postal workers staged an impromptu occupation inside the TD Bank where the Occupy Toronto protest started on Oct. 15.

"There's some postal workers occupying the Toronto Dominion Bank because they're so pissed off at the banks they couldn't help themselves," CUPW national union representative Dave Bleakney announced to the crowd.

"No one, no politician, no police, and no capitalist pig in an ivory tower will ever deny us what is ours. We're here to say if you don't give it to us, we shall take it and this rotten system will be no more!" said Bleakney as workers chanted, "So-So-So-Solidarity!" outside to support the sit-down protesters. After being escorted out of the bank by police one of the sit-down protesters, who only gave his first

name—Darcy—related how people inside the bank reacted, "We had people telling us that they understood exactly why we were there. They actually gave us new targets, they told us we should go talk to the Hydro companies because their charges are ridiculous. They told us we should go talk to the government about what's been happening. I think ordinary Canadians are fed up."

When asked the reason for the sit-in Darcy said, "We just wanted to make sure that people realize that the Occupy movement is alive and well here in Canada and that it's continuing to grow."

Sid Ryan, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, took on reports that the Mayor of Toronto wants to evict Occupy Toronto:

"Rob Ford you've said that you're going to go in and dismantle the occupation in St James park. Let me tell you Rob Ford, you've got a fight with the labour movement in Ontario if you do."

After waiting for the cheering crowd to subside Ryan continued, "If you move against the occupation. If you try to destroy the ability of the citizens of this community to voice their opinions against the banks, against the financial sector and against the greedy one per cent. Then you've got a major fight on your hands with the labour movement and with Occupy Toronto."

The crowd answered Ryan's remarks with loud chants of "General strike! General strike!" referring to a strike by all workers in a city, province or country that echoes a call for a general strike in Oakland, California in the wake of the violent eviction of Occupy Oakland by police on Wednesday.

Steelworker Fernando Silva, a worker at Infinity Rubber who has been on strike for 23 months, spoke passionately in Spanish through a translator, "We have been on strike for almost two years. You know why we're [still] in a strike? Because the government is allowing agency workers, scabs, to replace us. What the strike means to us is brothers have had to sell their houses and return their cars. People like me are in court because we cannot pay what we have to pay. I am really proud to be here and I look at all of you and I know our fight will be successful."

Across the street from Silva stood the flagship branch of the Bank of Montreal, which granted a \$7.5 million loan to Infinity Rubber at five per cent interest to replace an 18 per cent interest loan from another lender. Union members point to this loan as a key reason their strike has dragged on to become one of the longest in the history of Toronto.

Liisa Schofield from the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty took aim at the provincial government lack of responsibility:

"Last year, under Dalton McGuinty's provincial Liberal government, we saw the gutting of the special diet allowance. That's a food benefit for people on social assistance rates that are despicably low. A single person on welfare in Ontario is trying to survive on just \$592 bucks a month. At the same time that this government cut the special diet and gutted that program they gave a \$4.5 billion tax break to corporations over the next three years."

Mick Sweetman is the news intern at rabble.ca.





Peaking outside the box: Canada's place in the revolt

By Nadim Fetaih

RoarMag

Saturday, October 29, 2011

While many people will demand the end of greed or corruption, the simplest and most straightforward demand would be for the fall of the system itself.

Do not be fooled, while many people will demand the end to corporate greed, or corrupt government, or even demand extremist reformist strategies that can help appease humanity within the capitalist (or increasingly corporatist) system, none of these can be the occupational demand. The simplest and most straightforward demand we can make is for the fall of the system itself.

The system has failed. It has failed so entirely that everyone is focusing on the branches of its failures as they fall — and of course they should, as with each falling branch come incredibly disastrous outcomes. But with so many branches dying, does it not make sense to check its root? To plant a new tree and start the growth anew?

The People Demand the Fall of the System

Albert Einstein said it best: “If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.” Indeed, the Tunisians, Egyptians and the rest of the Arab Spring countries all knew this. “El Shaab Ureet Eskat el Nezam,” or “the people demand the fall of the regime,” has become the very sound that any Arab dictator fears hearing in the street. This is what poured millions of people into the squares, and will do the same in any country bound by the very shackles of neoliberal ideology. But the regime is not to blame. A face is a face. But the brain behind it, the spine and nerves, is the system itself. A system gone so awry that it has become no better than any colonialist or fascist society of history.

If you understand the root cause, though, the next question is clear: what the hell do we replace it with? And therein lies the reason I am writing this—and hopefully why you are reading this now.

Every country that has started an occupation has brought in a new aspect to the movement itself. Egypt brought the occupation into the view of the international public after Tunisia started the movement itself. Spain has spread the occupation and created a how-to guide at takethesquare.net. Greece radicalized the squares movement, showing what can happen if the peaceful occupation comes too late into a country whose people are already desperate for change. Occupy Wall Street spread the movement beyond the Mediterranean. What, then, is Canada's place? Before understanding that, we must first understand the unbelievable situation that Canada currently finds itself in.

The Canadian Tragedy:

From Colonial to Corporate Control

Canada has never had a revolution. It has been passed from one colonial force to the next. From the French colonialists to the British Empire, on to the United States' economic imperialism, and finally towards corporatist control, disconnected from any nation or territorial entity. Indeed, look around, we have lost around 11,000 Canadian companies and corporations since Brian Mulroney renamed the Foreign Investment Review Agency (or FIRA) and turned it into “Investment Canada”.

In fact, the drastic reform of the agency has ensured the sale of almost 11,000 Canadian companies to international—mainly American—cor-

porations. But those facts are beside the point. All that needs to be known is that Canada has been exploited for its natural resources since its very “founding”. Indeed, we are a developed nation treated like a Third World country. Not only have the imperialists raped the Canadian land for natural resources, but they have siphoned profit meant for the Canadian economy into their own.

These zombie corporations, be it in the form of the British colonialists or the multinational corporations of today, seek only to feed off our land, uncaring of the potentially disastrous consequences of destroying the country's money cycle. This may very well be why, between the mid-1990s and the 2000s, the gap between the rich and poor has grown faster in Canada than in almost any other country in the world—including the United States. The domestic money cycle no longer exists. Wages are paid, taxes (which are at an all-time low, actually approaching the numbers of the Celtic Tiger) are taken off of profit, the CEO's get an increased bonus, and the multinational corporation takes its profits out of the very economy it has taken it from.

All of this happens while corporate profits are being counted towards our GDP, sustaining the illusion of how “well” Canada's economy is doing. What the GDP, therefore, fails to show is how much money is actually being stolen from the Canadian people. This may also be the very reason why, per household, the Canadian citizen's debt is actually higher than the household debt of the United States. People's wages are never truly returned to them, so they revert to loans and credit to keep up the illusion of being part of the middle-class.

Nova Scotia's British royal descendant Coat of Arms features a chained unicorn and an idealized native stereotype. Is this okay?



How, then, can trickle-down economics work when no money stays in the country for it to trickle? This process seems incredibly close to the British's fur trade in Canada's wake, or even the siphoning of natural resources from Africa. But we get a different twist. Rather than a dictator or war monger controlling the country for the needs of its oppressor, Canada has a purely symbolic representative government. It imprints upon the population the belief that its voice is being heard, albeit only once every four years. It gives its citizens a false image of reality — that no revolution is needed, as the government is for the people, and that Canadians have it better than most. And I will not disagree with that, since people are not being killed in the streets. But, economically, there are far too many similarities to colonial times for us to simply disregard.

The Gushing Winds of Austerity Will Reach Our Shores

As the world currently stands, we are teetering on the edge of a world depression. The dominoes are set, and from a distance, we see the gushing winds come ever closer to the toppling of the first domino: Greece. If Greece defaults on its loans, Spain and Italy will likely follow. In a matter of months—if not weeks—Europe will head straight towards another major recession, if not a depression. When this happens, expect to see the United States, whose banks are profoundly exposed to Germany and France, to follow. Speculative economics has many downsides, the risk of contagion being one of them. With the debt these countries have accumulated, austerity measures will hit hard. This, in turn, will likely force

a major backlash from the population.

Considering the fact that Canada's exports to the U.S. make up about 75 percent of our total exports, what can anyone expect an entirely dependent economy to do when the very economy it depends on suddenly drops into depression? It will drop harder. In Greece, austerity measures have led to the privatization of half the hospitals. This type of disaster will be coming to Canada, too.

Throughout the birth of the Arab revolutions and the Occupy movement, the massive outpouring of people power seems to always be followed by violent crackdown. Tunisia, Egypt, Greece, Spain, the United States, Japan, and even Occupy Melbourne have been faced with violent police repression. The system and its representatives are growing increasingly scared. Canada, though, or more specifically Toronto, has yet to witness any police repression. This may at first glance be a negative thing, as Gene Sharp explained that a major part of creating a revolution is for protests to spread following the violent acts of the state upon peaceful protestors.

But this lack of violence has, for the first time since the movement's beginnings, given an occupation some breathing space. Yes, it was entirely due (at least in Toronto) to the G-20 police brutality. The police cannot afford to have another show of force onto peaceful protestors—at least not yet. Toronto has taken its beating to last, at the very least, until the austerity measures from the federal government hit. Or at least let's hope so.

Canada's Place in the Global Revolt

If you have read up until now, you have just read

the three reasons to back my hypothesis that Canadians will be the first to create a system to fight the ailing capitalist one. Better yet, Canada will be the first domino of the Western revolutions to engage in participatory democracy. Allow me to digress.

Canada's small population has up until now been seen as a negative thing. Many believe that Canada's population needs to increase in order to sustain economic growth. But, if we look at the country that started the global revolt in earnest—Tunisia—we can see that the small population actually helped ensure a larger share of the population to come out. If it weren't for Tunisia's revolt, their near-neighbor Egypt would never have followed. Egypt is considered the entertainment epicentre of the Middle East, and with its connectivity to the rest of the Arab world came the Arab Spring.

So yes, Tunisia's population is a measly 1/8th of the population that Egypt has, but with such a small population they were still able to be the first domino of the revolutionary wave. This, in the end, is the same situation that Canada finds itself in. With its population only 1/10th the size of the United States, Canada is able to spread its message to a far wider share of the population than the United States is, in a shorter amount of time. We, then, can be the spark that inspires not only the United States, but the rest of the Western world to revolt.

Taking a closer look at our population's circumstances, we can see a far more powerful situation. Canada's recession was but a blip on the radar. Our banks did not suffer a systemic meltdown. Instead, we were forewarned of a future that would come. Austerity measures have also not hit us like any



Canada was founded in part to bring beaver pelt hats to a hungry upper class European market. The near-extinction of this woodland mammal for a fashion fad is a fitting metaphor for contemporary Canadian elite's race to destroy our shared environment for short-term profit.

country in Europe, but we are forewarned of the looming budget cuts. We see a bleak future. We see all of our rights and safety nets being dropped at the mention of another global depression. But we are not quite there yet.

We are also far enough away that, once the eurozone breaks up and unleashes what Barry Eichengreen called “the mother of all financial crises”, the sweeping global depression will take some time to hit us—lthough not very long. For the moment, this is an incredibly empowering place for a population to be in. Not only have we not been hit with a massive economic slump (in comparison to other countries, that is) as a result of which we would have seen the loss of many of the social structures we currently enjoy—but we see the end of it coming. This, in the final analysis, is the most powerful thing we have going for us. We are not hungry, but we see the food diminishing.

Now imagine if Greece had had the ironic “luxury” of seeing its economy crumble before total collapse actually kicked in. Imagine if the people knew, months or years ahead, that their government would push through the draconian austerity measures they are enforcing now. The Greeks would have been able to prepare for the coming onslaught. This is exactly what Canada must do. But simply being prepared by being organized is not enough. It is not enough to point out a problem. We must be prepared with a solution. That solution may seem daunting to find, but in fact we find it right in front of our eyes. Just as the Occupy movement has used participatory democracy to organize its efforts, Canada must have an alternative system

of decision-making ready to be put into place, with participatory democracy as its spine.

Breaking Out of the Box and Imagining the Great Beyond

This, of course, is no easy task. Creating an entirely new system is almost unfathomable. But picture this system as a box. To leave this box for a single person is a near-impossible task, plus, to go back into the box and explain what one saw “out there”... well, who would believe it? But if people took it upon themselves to carve a small hole into the box's walls to get an impression of what is to be found “outside” of it, and if those very people can communicate what they saw to each other, then collectively they can provide a glimpse of what lies beyond. Collectively, they can show the world “inside” the box what may be possible if everyone breaks down just a tiny bit of it.

This is what participatory democracy is all about, and this is what I would propose. After all is said and done, even though Ernesto Che Guevara always said that one cannot wait for the time to be right for revolution, if the time is right for revolution, it will be the duty of all citizens to take it upon themselves to become revolutionaries.

The time is right for you Canada! It is now your duty to fight this revolution. Not with guns, bats, bombs or molotovs. No. Use your intellect. Break apart a piece of the box and witness on the outside a new system that is actually very plausible. This is the most dangerous thing you can do within a failing system. This, by any means, is the most damaging weapon we have against the oppressor. And,

beyond anything else, this is the most revolutionary act one can take. Peak outside the box. Communicate. Organize. And then break the old one.

Unite Canada! The breathing space that the lack of police violence has provided to Canadians is our very opening into this new world. Let us use the occupations of cities, universities and colleges. Let us set up meetings to debate the political system, social safety nets, economics, and the future of businesses. Let us put aside our political titles and boundaries. Let us work together, using the best of each political theory and belief system towards the creation of a new system, run and created by and for the people. Think outside of the box that the present system has placed us in. It is dilapidated. It is falling apart. And if we do not find an escape now, the whole world will fall on top of it.

Together, you can make the first true revolution: a revolutionary process—the revolution that does not stop. The permanent revolution. This, brothers and sisters, is what participatory democracy is about: working never to stop or create an “End of History” but to function as time itself does — constantly moving forward. With each generation, with each of the participants in power, with each consensus created, a new revolution will occur. One by the people, and for the people.

Long live the Occupations. Long live the Global Revolution. And long live you, for you are the revolution.

*Nadim is a Canadian-Egyptian filmmaker. His first documentary, *A Tale of Two Revolutions*, is scheduled to be released later this year.*



Your Voices Are Needed on the Ground: A Feminist Experience at Occupy Wall Street

Kara Newhouse interviews Occupy Wall Street activist Suzahn Ebrahimian about their reflections and criticisms of gender relations in Liberty Square

By Kara Newhouse

CannonBallBlog.com

Wednesday, October 19, 2011

Kara Newhouse: How are you and what's the latest down there?

Suzahn Ebrahimian: I'm doing great—actually taking my first day off from Liberty Plaza since the 17th. I'm trying to reflect on my position and perspective in the square.

KN: Have you been sleeping there the whole time?

SE: No, I was for a bit and then started coming to Brooklyn, partly because there are lots of people who have nowhere else to sleep but the square and real estate is scarce – not unlike the rest of Manhattan I guess! So I go to Brooklyn and let friends at the square rest in my space, shower, etc.

KN: Make sense. What are some of the aspects of your position and perspective there that you've been reflecting on?

SE: Mostly my extremely gendered critique of the occupation and how it is being organized. It's crazy to be in a paradigm where you have more of a right to call out patriarchy and oppression, but it still exists in much of the same dynamics as the "outside" world. I find myself struggling to identify with the movement because I am constantly trying to

make space for myself in it. And that's exhausting.

KN: I have several questions from that! Let's start with what you say about having more of a right to call out patriarchy and oppression. In what ways is are you able to do that at OWS?

SE: Well, firstly the community of OWS is pretty diverse politically. The spectrum is more than just reform → revolution. It's a dynamic space where people's philosophies and politics overlap. It's surprising how many people are there simply to listen and learn from others. So I can pretty much count on support for anti-oppression, perhaps not from everyone, but it's definitely there. And some people who have never taken a step back to look at their privilege seem to be receptive rather than defensive because, for example, calling out patriarchy is framed as a way to build community. The emphasis on the 99% helps with this idea. A sort of 'we are all in this together' essence defines the square. And of course, there are some who have totally committed to making Liberty Square a safer space, like the 'speak easy caucus' and the 'safer spaces committee' and the 'circle A circle.'

KN: Can you describe those things a little?

SE: I haven't been involved in the speak easy cau-

cus, although I wish I could be. So I don't want say I can totally define the scope of what they do. From what I understand they started out as a non-male identified caucus, although I think they have expanded to include people who feel marginalized speaking or working in groups.

The safer spaces working group straddles the border between support group, mediation, and anti-oppression awareness-raising. They wear pink arm bands and make themselves available for conflict resolution and emotional support.

Circle A circle is an informal group for anarchists that I have been involved with. We get together to discuss things like the horizontal structure of OWS, anti-oppression, and to just generally support each other since the anarchist presence at OWS was definitely in the minority in the first few weeks.

KN: Thanks for those explanations. What other roles or groups have you been active in since Sept. 17th?

SE: I'm with the legal working group and the direct action working group. My involvement with both has been from their beginnings. It's been a really intense evolutionary process.

KN: How so?



SE: With the legal group I've been trying to establish Know Your Rights trainings on a more standard basis, and direct action kind of started my path towards the legal group because I noticed a really disparate level of experience. I can do a quick overview.

I started early on with direct action because it is what I have the most experience with and training for, and because it kind of acts as a physical counter to my usually theoretical approach. But it was pretty apparent, like I mentioned just now, that most who wanted to participate in OWS actions had never been involved with any sort of activism before. This, paired with a few violent arrests in the first few weeks, prompted me to start the legal working group with two other women. I was, and still am, primarily interested in training folks and preparing them for violent encounters with the state (or, as some like to say, arrests).

But the reality is that a huge legal network and foundation had to be built. This is still in the process of being teased out, but we've had a lot of support so it's coming along. I'm just now getting back to scheduling trainings! Very exciting!

KN: Cool—what do you like about doing direct action trainings?

SE: I like knowing that a movement is being directly constructed. I firmly believe that sharing skills is one of the most important aspects to any community-building. And it really inspires me to see people connecting the dots—slowly realizing that they can learn how to struggle constructively for justice, and understanding that there is an entire community dedicated and built around taking action.

Of course, the best part of any DA training is when the people you trained become trainers

themselves. It's really rewarding all around. Plus, burnout is a huge concern. If you have more people who know how to do/perform your skills, you can take a step back for a second and have faith that things will continue on.

KN: Very true. Alright, now that we know more about what you've been up to, can you explain why it's been challenging to make a space for yourself in all of this?

SE: I can start with patriarchy. I get concerned that I am overly critical. But to me, feeling overly critical of what is happening is a sign that something isn't right—and perhaps that's where my real concern lies. The interactions I have in that space, in Liberty Square, are frustrating and sometimes quite disempowering. It is usually assumed that I have no experience, or a low experience level. I've noticed this doesn't happen as much to my male bodied/identified friends in that space. It means that I have to work twice as hard to gain confidence and authority for my opinions, feelings, and emotions.

KN: How do you respond to those experiences?

SE: A lot of times I get very frustrated. I can deal with gendered language, with a lot of the patriarchal baggage that is carried into Liberty Square. But when it comes to deeper issues of inclusion and validation, I feel exhausted and upset at the hypocrisy of it all. An anarchistic, horizontal space that doesn't have a huge critique of sexist behaviors and hierarchies makes no sense to me. In the end, I don't want to spend my time fighting for a voice in that space. I came there expecting that space and want to spend my energy fighting injustice and organizing.

The biggest problem that I have in dealing with disempowering interactions is quite specific. It's also probably an age-old conundrum: In order to get my voice heard in an interaction, I sometimes have to find a male-identified ally from my more radical circles. They literally have to talk to other men in the space about how to talk to me, or convey messages that wouldn't be heard if they just came from me. The problem is that I fixed the initial issue of not being heard, but I used the same patriarchal structures to solve the problem. I'm really concerned as to how to find a middle ground.

KN: I like how you pinpointed that challenge...if you could do it without a male-identified ally, in your ideal vision how would that interaction go?

SE: Well, ideally I would be taken seriously from the outset, not as the queer voice or the female voice, but as someone who is involved in the movement as a whole. Initially I wanted to say "my opinion would be taken seriously." But that doesn't quite hit it on the head. I am confident that my opinions, once heard, are understood and taken at face value. My involvement as a whole, any non-cisgendered male's involvement for that matter, feels like a different story. We should be taken seriously as an integral part to creating the just, horizontally organized world we want to see.

KN: I agree! What you said about being taken seriously "not as the queer voice or the female voice" speaks to something that I've never been sure how to think about in regards to anti-oppression ideas—that sometimes it feels like tokenism.

SE: Yes, and it's been happening in the space. I think it comes from being on the border between a radical



space and a progressive space. There's an awareness but still, cisgendered males feel like they are best equipped to solve the problems of anti-oppression.

So they find a "woman of color," for example, to facilitate a GA [General Assembly] for a night and don't understand how that's just not adequate.

KN: Have you been involved in organizing where it goes deeper than that?

SE: Most of my organizing experience was through a large nonprofit. I experienced a lot of the same problems there. Other than that, my relationships with other feminists really helped refine my critique. I'm interested in finding radical feminist spaces but haven't organized politically with any. I have an idea of what organizing in this way looks like, for example, having cis-gendered males train NOT to talk to the media, etc. These ideas really inspire me. But the spaces and people that I've organized with haven't really identified with this style of organizing. I am still wrestling with the best way to change structures of oppression.

Also, the circle A circle in OWS is really a great safer space.

KN: We're always learning! Here's something else I'm curious what to hear your thoughts about: at the occupation's General Assembly's they use progressive stacking [taking names of who wants to speak with order preference to marginalized voices] —the problem being that people are identifying who's marginalized by their appearance, which is slippery with gender and definitely doesn't account for class...

SE: I actually am on the fence about progressive stack. When we take stack to queue for speakers,

simply putting women/people of color/etc. at the top of list is great if, for example, the conversation has been dominated by cisgendered males. And to be honest, this happens quite often in GA, if not all the time. But we obviously can't account for every marginalized voice. And I think it can be used as a band-aid of sorts. I feel, for example, very self-conscious when my name has been put in front of stack. It is reminiscent of the dilemma I pointed out earlier...we aren't actually changing any of the dynamics by putting a woman first on stack if the overwhelming majority of people who speak are still cis-gendered males. So perhaps progressive stack doesn't actually hold people accountable to practice anti-oppression, to really step back and allow for/listen to other voices instead of just waiting an extra turn to speak.

KN: One thing I've read and heard a lot from #occupy participants is that no one person can represent all the experiences present. That's always true for people's experiences of gender—while being aware of the difficulty of finding universal truths, how do you yourself decide what's important in gender issues?

SE: Patriarchy is, at best, a really paradoxical universal because it requires participation and interaction; it only exists because it exists—because we fail to acknowledge it. The reality is that oppressive structures establish themselves as a dominant paradigm when they are ignored. And for that matter, participation/interaction are always complex processes because the social is complex. So you have this nameless, shapeless structure dictating the limits of my participation in any given activity.

On top of this, issues that are so prominent for me might not even be visible to some—and of

course that works in the other direction. In the end, what's important in gender issues isn't decided by some overarching theory of patriarchy or kyriarchy, but by personal experience. How are folks feeling marginalized and how can we acknowledge alter the structure to change this? We can't simply decide which issue is the 'most important' or 'more important' at any given time because that decision implies an end to the critique of the structure, which is basically a de-legitimization of personal experience. The issue is 'solved'—i.e. women can vote, schools are integrated—and the system is simply reformed. When most are calling for revolution, reform just won't do. And I think that the occupation itself clearly points to the fact that communities should be constantly evolving through self-critique, which again, involves personal experience being amplified and allowed to shape the organizational structure of the community.

KN: What advice do you have for other feminists who want to participate in occupations—in NYC or the many inspired by Occupy Wall Street?

SE: I would say don't give up. It's really disempowering to not only have a critique of power relations but to represent that critique—to be marginalized because you are living proof of it. Same goes for anyone marginalized by class, race, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity. But if there is any time to change this dynamic, I would ask, 'why not now?' Your voices are needed on the ground more than ever—for the first time in a long time, the world is listening.

Occupy to Self Manage

By Michael Albert

ZNet

Tuesday, October 25, 2011

I have yet to see my nearest large occupation, Boston, or the precursor of all U.S. occupations, Wall Street. Instead, I have been on the road for the past six weeks in Thessalonika and Athens Greece; Istanbul and Diyarbakir Turkey; Lexington, Kentucky; London, England; Dublin, Ireland; and in Barcelona, Madrid, and Valencia Spain.

In all these places, I talked with diverse individuals at many meetings and popular assemblies. I met people involved in occupations, as well as audiences assembled by my hosts to hear about participatory economics. Beyond addressing assigned topics, my own priority was to learn about local movements. I repeatedly asked what folks struggling for many months wished to say to other folks first embarking on similar paths.

Boredom, Disempowerment, and Consensus Obstruct Growth

In Greece and Spain, a single message predominated. It had nothing to do with analyses of capitalism or other analytic focuses. Instead, Greek and Spanish activists reported that they had massive assemblies in widespread cities and their occupations grew, grew, grew, so that assemblies were up to 12,000, 15,000—and then they shrunk, shrunk, shrunk, so that assemblies are now not meeting, or are meeting in the hundreds, or less.

Yet I heard, time after time, that nothing had diminished regarding the population's rejection of unfolding injustices. The people remain fed up in huge numbers and still turn out massively for demonstrations, marches, and strikes. So why were most people who were rallying and marching no longer assembling? The reply I heard at every stop was that the decline of the assemblies wasn't due to repression, or to people being co-opted, or to people being tricked or saddened by media distortion or dismissal. In fact, the assemblies shrinking wasn't due to anything anyone else did to the assemblies, or said about them, or didn't do to them, or didn't say about them, activists repeatedly reported. Instead, they told me, the problem emanated from within.

For example, Greek and Spanish activists said that at assemblies initially people spoke with incredible passion of their plights and desires. Their voices often broke. Their hands shook. Each time someone rose to speak, something real, passionate, and persistent happened. It was enchanting and exciting. People were learning not only new facts and interpretations—and, indeed, that kind of learning was relatively modest—they were also learning new confidence and new modes of engaging with others. But after days and then weeks, the flavor of the talks

shifted. From being new folks speaking passionately and recounting their reasons for being present and their hopes for their future by delivering deeply felt and quite unique stories, the speakers shifted toward being more seasoned or habituated folks, who lectured attendees with prepackaged views. The lines of speakers became overwhelmingly male. Their deliveries became overwhelmingly rehearsed. Listening to robotic repetition and frequent predictable and almost text-like ranting got boring and alienating. Sometimes it was even demeaning.

At the same time, new people, who were still far more prevalent, didn't know what to do while they were occupying. We could assemble, they reported. We could talk and engage with each other. We could listen to others and sometimes debate a bit - the Greek and Spanish Assemblers reported - but, how long could we do that and feel it was worth the time we had to spend away from our families, friends, and jobs, not to mention from rooms with a roof?

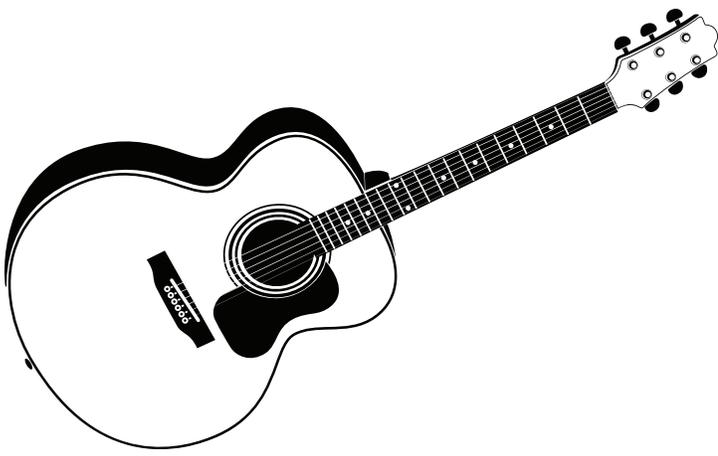
As they first formed, the assemblies were invigorating and uplifting. We were creating a new community, I was told. We were making new friends. We were hearing from new people. We were enjoying an environment where dissent was the norm. But as days passed, and then weeks, it got too familiar. And it wasn't obvious to folks what more they could do. There weren't tasks to undertake. We weren't being born anymore, we were dying. It was hard. For many it was impossible to keep learning and keep contributing. There was a will, but there was not a way. Folks didn't have meaningful things to do that made them feel part of a worthy project. We felt, in time, only part of a mass of people.

After a time, many asked, why should I stay and listen to boring talks? Why should I be hugely uncomfortable and cut off from family and work, if I have nothing to do that is constructive, nothing that is empowering, nothing that furthers worthy aims? And so people started to attend less, and then to leave.

Another factor that was initially exciting but later became tedious, was seeking consensus. At first it was novel. It implied trust, which felt good. It implied shared intentions, which felt inspiring. But after awhile, seeking consensus became tortured, a time waster, and its reason for being the only decision making approach became steadily less compelling.

Why can't we arrive at decisions which some people do not like and don't even want to participate in? Why can't we arrive at decisions, and have a strong minority that dissents, and then respect that minority, and even have it pursue other possibilities





to see their worth? Why do we allow some small group to cause discussions to continue without end, turning off many from relating when the small group has no legitimate claim to greater influence than anyone else - save that our mode of decision making gives them a veto?

Folks recounted all these dynamics very graphically and movingly. No one said that people stopped participating in assemblies because of fear or the cops or depression over the newspapers. No one said people left because they had developed doubts about protest or resistance, much less about the condition of society. Instead, everyone I spoke with, and it was a lot of very committed people, told me participants left due to lacking good reasons to stay. The bottom line was that the assemblies got tedious and, ironically, even disempowering. Folks wondered, why must I be here every day and every night? The thought nagged. It led to legions moving on.

Making the Very Good Even Better

What is the solution, I asked, in each new city, and we discussed possible answers.

Occupy but better yet, self manage, I was told. The former option is basically passive—the latter is active and yields tasks and opportunities to contribute.

Grow in numbers and awareness, but those who become well learned must stay in touch with new people, and always remember that new people's involvement matters most. Otherwise old timers are getting more knowledgeable but also more aloof, and new people will not stay.

Why not have classes for learning? Why not have activities for creating? Why not have actions for winning changes? Always speak to the new people. Always speak from experience, from events, not from preconceived lines. Always involve yourself and new people in tangible and worthy activity. Make the options evident and easy to become involved with.

Of course some things can't be solved at occupations themselves. Sleeping out is a young person's passion—but not an option for everyone. In Dublin, this was particularly evident. So, while sleeping in an occupied space makes sense for some young or homeless folks, why not proactively take for granted that many other folks, particularly with families, will not and cannot sleep under the stars? Why not have a program of activities that returns people to their home locales for organizing pur-

poses each night, or even for all but the explicit time of assembly meetings, perhaps?

Ideas that resonated in the many discussions, and that activists involved felt needed preponderant support, included: once an occupation has a lot of people, have subgroups initiate other occupations in more places, all federated together and providing one another mutual aid. In the most local, neighborhood occupations, visit every home. Talk with every resident. Involve as many neighbors as possible. Determine real felt needs. If what is most upsetting neighbors is housing concerns, daycare issues, traffic patterns, mutual aid, loneliness, whatever, try to act to address the problems.

Have occupations self manage and create innovations artistically, socially, and politically. Have occupations occupy indoors, not just outside. It is a leap, perhaps, but not much of one. In Barcelona and Madrid—some have tentatively begun occupying abandoned apartments and other buildings, preparatory, I believe, to inviting the homeless to dwell in them, as well as to using them for meetings and the like. In Valencia I was at a very fledgling university occupation, begun, indeed, after a talk. But to occupy buildings, especially institutions like universities or media, isn't just a matter of call it, or tweet it, and they will come. It is a matter of go get them, inform them, inspire them, enlist them, empower them, and they will come.

In Greece and Spain, and to an extent the other venues I visited too, violence was another focus. All who I talked with agreed it was a suicidal approach on two counts. First, violence is the state's main strength. Shifting the terms of conflict toward violence shifts it precisely where the state and elites want it - toward their strength. Second, violence distorts the project. It makes it inaccessible for many. It makes bystanders critical. It diminishes outreach, and outreach is the basis of all gains.

I have been to Greece a number of times, and in earlier trips this view was quite weak among young Greeks, who were more typically ready and eager to rumble. But now the non violence stance has growing traction in Greece. In Spain, from the start, it was predominant and Spanish activists have successfully avoided giving the state an excuse for violence, thus causing every act of violence by the state to reverberate to its disadvantage.

Forget about violence and rioting, develop campaigns emanating from occupations, which means, said activists in Spain, developing demands to fight for. Indeed, over and over activists involved asked

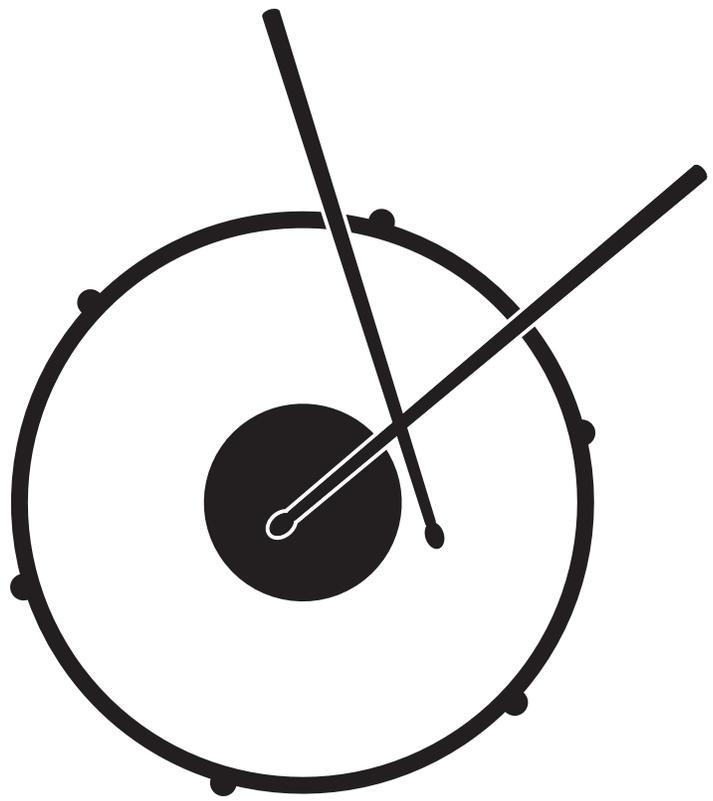
about demands that could unite constituencies and which could be fought for in creative and participatory ways so that victories were possible which would really matter to people's lives and enthusiasm and spur further struggle. They felt that while the open ended character of dissent worked fantastically initially, and was warranted while waiting for enough outreach so demands would represent a real constituency's views, not just those of a few leaders, over time, one needs focus.

Some suggestions for demands that arose were welcome. Others less so. For example, everyone liked demanding big cuts in military spending and reinstatement and enlargement of funds for social programs. But what folks really liked was when that demand was explored and enlarged to include transforming the purposes of military bases that would otherwise be shrunk or closed due to budget cutting to instead stay open and do worthy public works such as building low income housing, first for base residents who would need and appreciate it, and then for the homeless.

And regarding the homeless, a demand that hit home was freezing foreclosures, returning homes, distributing vacant homes, housing the homeless—including the idea of enacting occupations to undertake these results directly, a process that has begun in Barcelona and Madrid which also have robust movements to block foreclosures.

Another approach that seemed to gather considerable support was to demand full employment. But that wasn't all. Recognizing the lack of current demand for produced goods people realized a sensible full employment demand would require also reducing the work week by 10 - 25 percent, depending on the country's unemployment rate. Of course if most people saw their incomes decline by a corresponding amount, they would face catastrophe, and thus the reduced hours demand has to be combined with a demand that most people would incur no loss of income. (Living wage policies and redistributionist progressive taxation would also be part of the mix.) Full employment additionally strengthens working people because when they all have jobs, the threat of being fired declines to near irrelevance. Winning this demand also means workers enjoy more leisure and higher hourly wages for those in need. Additional costs would have to be born by owners, and if they don't agree, that's fine—workers might want to occupy those factories, and then move to self manage them.

Another popular notion was going after media.



One option that resonated as a possible campaign goal, even while obviously falling short of total transformation, (though certainly on the way toward it), was demanding one or more new sections of mainstream newspapers, or shows, or whatever which would be devoted to, for example, labor dissent, or feminism, or peace, or ecology, and so on. Crucially, these would not be managed in the usual corporate fashion, but, instead, via self management of their participants under the umbrella of major labor, women's, peace, or ecology organizations, for example.

In these exchanges, activists were imagining a worldwide campaign against mainstream media, against military spending, for low income quality housing, and for full employment including accompanying income redistribution and increased leisure. They envisioned these campaigns unifying protest into resistance and then unifying resistance into creative self management, even as each occupation also related to its own local concerns.

Self Managements!

Occupations—or what might come to be known, in time, as self managements—would occur in local neighborhoods and federate up to cities and beyond, but also at the entrances to, and perhaps even inside, mainstream media, and at military recruiting stations and bases, at government ministries and branches, and finally, one can envision, even at factories and other workplaces. And in such endeavors not everyone would have to sleep outdoors but everyone would have to give some of their time, resources, insight, and energy to aid one or another campaign of the overall project.

The revolution, so to speak, is not immediately at hand. In my youth we bellowed—“We want the world and we want it now!” It was fine as a rousing chant. But we need to also understand that it takes time, it takes sustained effort, traversing not weeks

or months, but years.

Indeed, even with the incredible speed and ingenuity of current outbreaks of activism, there are undeniably pessimistic scenarios in which occupations wind down and then demos happen for a time but manage to win only minor if any gains until movement morbidity sets in. This is what the Greeks and Spaniards are trying to avoid. It is why they are beginning new kinds of occupations aimed at media, housing, universities, and at the transformation of budgets, and soon, perhaps at hiring and firing. Projects that are designed to enhance and widen participation in ways leading to massive involvement of masses of people - all knowing what they want and how they can contribute to attaining it.

There are, however, also optimistic scenarios in which occupations diversify and morph into self managing projects radiating out campaigns for change while also welcoming into sustained participation countless actors of all ages and orientations. In this picture, daily marches to support other campaigns in a city—like in New York currently—with growth in numbers and confidence, leads to empty buildings becoming residences and meeting places, to mainstream media businesses becoming targets for occupation, and likewise for universities, and other workplaces of all kinds. Simultaneously, local neighborhoods generate their own assemblies, again, like in New York, initiated by the residents who had been schooled in the earlier, larger, city-wide endeavors, and then local participants patiently and empathetically enter every house, every kitchen and living room, and elicit desires, and, in time, participation.

Paths Forward

Envisioning all this and much more, once people's ambition is unleashed from the shackles of daily pessimism, was not hard for folks I talked with. The

optimistic path is a scenario involving planting the seeds of the future in the present. It is a scenario that marshals energy and insights to building alternatives, but also winning gains now all fought for and implemented in ways that build desires and organization aimed at winning still more gains in the future.

We need a sense of proportion and pacing. The occupations now underway still involve only a small fraction, indeed a tiny fraction, of the people in pain and angry about it. To grow, the occupations need to very explicitly conceive themselves in ways that address immediate needs, are aimed at viable and worthy long term goals, and develop modes of participation that cause normal folks, enduring normal harsh conditions, to feel that giving their time makes good sense because it can eventually lead to a new social system with vastly better outcomes than those presently endured. Occupations that began in response to economic insanity need, as well, to broaden and adopt a more encompassing focus taking into account not only the economy, but also, and equally, matters of race, gender, age, ability, ecology, and war and peace. This is what makes a movement a threatening project able to induce capitulation from authorities afraid to make it grow even larger. It is what makes a movement worthy of winning, as well.

We need not only patience in the face of a long struggle, but also a sense of optimism and desire. The occupations are a start, a veritable firestorm of initiation, and they already have vastly wider support than their direct participation evidences. There is a possibility lurking in these events that is awesome in its potential implications. We should all be patient and keep our heads, yet we should all also realize that this may be a very special time, especially for young people, during which it is possible to make an indelible, enduring, and incredibly desirable mark on history.

Chile: Camila Vallejo interview

Long before anyone had the idea to occupy Wall Street, a group of brave young women in Chile organized an occupation of their school to demand free university education for all. They have managed to hold out for over 6 months. Here is an interview with one of their organizers, 23 year old Camila Vallejo.

BBC World

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

This is a translation from the original Spanish of an interview by BBC World with Camila Vallejo, a leader of the Chilean student movement, as published in El Mostrador of Santiago on October 18.

After close to six months of protests, the student movement, which is demanding free public education, continues shaping the country's political agenda. A new 48-hour strike begins this Tuesday.

Students, professors, environmentalists and the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores, one of Chile's principal unions, support the protest, which will include as its central event a demonstration scheduled for Wednesday afternoon.

On the day before these mobilizations, BBC World spoke in Paris with Camila Vallejo, president of the Federación de Estudiantes de la Universidad de Chile and one of the most visible faces of the movement.

Vallejo, a 22-year-old student of geography, has been in Europe since Friday along with three other Chilean student representatives to present their demands and to attempt to internationalize the movement.

You traveled to Europe to meet with international organizations and with intellectuals. Of the advise the intellectuals have given you, which do you like the best?

The philosopher Edgard Morin gave us confidence. He told us that higher education cannot be tied to the market, but that public education has to be guaranteed because countries need it in order to develop.

And Stéphane Hessel (author of the book *Indignez-Vous!* or, in English translation, *Time for Outrage*) urged us to strengthen communications and to instill our ideas at a world level, to spread our proposals through all the media.

Speaking of Stéphane Hessel, do you believe the Chilean student movement is connected in some way with social movements like the indignados and Occupy Wall Street?

The Chilean student movement does not spring from the indignados. It is not a spontaneous movement, but a long process based on a profound analysis of what is happening in Chile, of the

injustice.

We understand the struggle of the indignados but in Chile we have gotten past discontent. Now we have to look forward and to construct an alternative for the country.

Taking into account that there are already student protests in other countries, how do you believe the movement can be internationalized?

The different movements, in Chile, Colombia, Brazil, France, Spain, do not spring up as copies but because they have particular concerns.

But they are visualized as a whole. It is the struggle of those who have awakened to construct a different model of society at national and international levels. There is a coherence, which is resistance against the privatizing model or an advance toward the conquest of this right.

In France, we met with the UNEF (Union Nationale des Étudiants de France). They made us aware of the consciousness-raising they are carrying out in order to resist the concealed privatization the government is engaged in. We are involved in different processes but we have the same objectives and there are ties of international solidarity among the youth.

What educational model do you envision for Chile?

No student has wanted to copy anything. Chile is thinking within its own model, which would allow the integration of everyone and is free. We want education that can transform the society and that can develop professionals capable of building democracy.

How do you see the future of the student movement?

The student movement is being debated at a decisive juncture, after five months of mobilization. We have to think about how to advance tactically so it will continue.

These days, the dialogue with the government has broken down. They are going to work the reforms of the student scholarships and they are excluding us from these discussions, which they want to send to Parliament.

So regardless of how much we trust the Parlia-

ment, we are going to have to work on them. We want them not to pass the budget law of the nation while there are no bills on educational matters that are mutually agreeable to the students.

Don't you think your advocacy is detrimental to the student movement as a whole?

The personalization of the movement is due to politicians and the communications media. It is a strategy used frequently with those who arise with social demands. It is used a lot in Chile and I believe in other countries of the world as well.

In Cuba they talk about castrismo, in Venezuela about chavismo. Everything is personalized around the supposed leaders and what is not seen is that it is a process shared by the majority. Basically, they try to destroy them and in the process bring down the movement.

So we have been more vulnerable this way. They have accused me of being manipulated by the Communist Party, of charging for the interviews I give. They have told me that I am profiting from all this.

You are about to graduate. Are you thinking of continuing in the movement regardless?

I am going to continue participating on the student question, depending on the next FECh elections. Together with all my comrades who are not visible, we are going to be constructing. And we want to plan this movement politically because for the first time the demands of one sector have become a social movement that includes many sectors.

Are you thinking of a political career?

I am an activist, I am prepared to place myself at the service of the needs for construction, which this movement needs so much, like anyone else.

In the context of the coming elections, I believe that it is not something that is particularly mine but that the youths have to register as candidates for city councils. Let them dispute in the municipalities with the right, who are not in agreement with responding to our demands, which are just.

Now the young are getting interested in politics and they have to assume this responsibility. We have to take charge and to carry out a project built through participation. So we have to have a vocation for power, in the good sense of the word



OCCUPY



APRFront's Open Letter to Occupy San Diego

Unsettling America

Isang Bagsak

All Peoples Revolutionary Front

Wednesday, October 26, 2011

"My people need freedom, we tryin' to get all we can get..." —Dead Prez

We, the All Peoples Revolutionary Front, have been intrigued by the developments of Occupy Wall Street and the way this action has compelled many around the world to engage in public protest. While acknowledging the ways in which our struggles converge, we must articulate the ways in which our struggles diverge. We continue to observe brutality in the legacy of capitalism, a system that relied upon the enslavement of African and Caribbean peoples, the genocide and displacement of Indigenous peoples, and the violent seizure of lands for colonial profit. Economic exploitation of labor and resources is only one process of continuing colonization that disproportionately impacts communities of color and third world peoples. Our struggle for self-determination in the present moment contributes to the histories of resistance that began long before us.

APRFront is a collaboration of all abilities, generations, genders, gender non-conforming, sexual orientations, indigeneity, race, ethnicities, cosmologies, faith and spiritual practices, and identities. We are a constellation of collectives involving students, activists, community organizers, artists, educators, justice advocates, and all those who engage critical knowledge to inform political struggle. APRFront identifies with a diverse range of practices, including Social Justice Education Pedagogy, anti-oppressive movement building, critical consciousness development, and privilege-checking strategies. We acknowledge all levels of education in our coalition, and welcome folks with a willingness to learn, teach, and engage in the different political ideologies of revolutionary liberation such as socialism-marx-

ism-womyn of color feminism, intersectionality, anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and zapatismo. We realize these terms and ideologies may not be immediately accessible, but we will provide explanation to those who desire to learn and practice our methods. While we believe in education, we also believe that part of our self-determination is not having to fully disclose our identities and the practices we study in every public statement we make to "Occupy" movements.

We recognize the necessity and strategic importance of visible demonstrations which movements for social change rely upon, understanding that our struggle continues the legacy and knowledge of critical consciousness in direct action. We are concerned that Occupation is a romanticized and idealized form of activism, one that does not consider what must follow civil disobedience in the long-term. We envision the sustainability of organizing within our communities and collective contribution to accountable leadership, involving structured consensus-based decision making through the guiding power of the masses. Within this framework of self-determination, the colonizing language of Occupation does not translate. Because this land called "San Diego" has endured centuries of colonial conquest and domination at the expense of Indigenous Kumeyaay peoples, APRFront cannot support, endorse, or conscientiously mobilize in solidarity with the concept of Occupation. Our level of engagement with Occupy San Diego serves the purpose of claiming space for people of color and articulating the movement to decolonize on a local and global scale.

When we imagine decolonization, we do not make demands of those in power or those who are behind Occupy movements; we create

power and frame the alternative. We envision our autonomy and our destinies to be liberated from government dictation, intervention, and colonization. This does not mean "inclusion" and token representation within existing systems of oppression, but an elimination of the systems themselves. It is neither our desire nor our intention to simply reform the colonizing structures of capitalism and white supremacy, but to dismantle them and create the terms of our existence. We understand why Occupy San Diego is meaningful to local activists—veterans and newcomers alike—but it is not our vision. Cherokee scholar Andrea Smith writes: "On one hand, it is necessary to engage in oppositional politics to corporate and state power by taking power. Yet if we only engage in the politics of taking power, we will have a tendency to replicate the hierarchical structures in our movements. So it is also important to 'make power' by creating those structures within our organizations, movements, and communities that model the world we are trying to create." It is the uncritical nationalism of Occupy movements, often expressed in the spirit of "taking 'our' country back," that indicates to us a taking of existing power and a perpetuation of oppressive systems. If we return to the "revolutionary" moment of "America," we must also return to slavery, genocide, and the total monopoly of white male supremacy.

We have an understanding of revolution that does not conform to the US colonial model; our revolution continues in solidarity and dialogue with slave rebellions and Black Power, Indigenous resistance and zapatismo, Arab and African uprisings, queer and womyn of color organizing, Third World Liberation movements, and all peoples movements that have battled colonization and



imperialism. APRFront is a people of color-lead coalition allowing white identified anti-racists and activists, who challenge internal and structural white supremacy, to play a supporting role. We find the dynamic of this model to be crucial to self-determination, revolution, and social change. We are also conscious in ensuring that our leadership is not only intentionally people of color-lead, but that gender non-conforming people, cis-gender, and queer womyn of color assume leadership roles. It is important to emphasize the radical political education and diverse identities folks bring to this coalition, rather than placing the emphasis on skin color alone. It was Critical Race scholar George Lipsitz who said “white supremacy is an equal opportunity employer,” meaning the practice of whiteness is not exclusive to folks with white skin. Further, we recognize white supremacy and racism as structures that exist and operate beyond individual violence and interpersonal conflict. We do not believe social justice has been achieved with one individual of color in a position of power, whether they are occupying the highest station of the white house or occupying the surrounding environment.

APRFront recognizes the need for leaders, but we make the distinction between leaders who are chosen, cultivated, and sustained by the people, and leaders who are upheld by oppressive governance, state regimes, and dictatorial power. We are following the journey of the Civil Rights movement, and by this we mean the interconnected and enduring struggles of Chicano Resistance, the Philippines’ People Power movements, the American-Indian movement, the Cuban Revolution, Third World Feminist movements, and others. We do not perceive the Civil Rights Movement in the US to be a temporary historical event that began and ended

with the dynamic of Black vs. white, but a globally interconnected and persistent struggle for self-determination. We believe we must organize beyond the superficial language of multiculturalism and diversity into the organizing work of dismantling white supremacy. Although we respect the work that is being done by our fellow community members in Occupy, it is our position that committees and/or caucuses of color within Occupy movements reinforce structures of white supremacy. The relegating of people of color to the secondary and supporting roles of working groups, committees and/or caucuses creates a hierarchical design in which whiteness is again privileged and enforced through what is described as “leaderless” organizing.

APRFront works for collective agency in community empowerment to disrupt and subvert the focused individualism of capitalist greed, imperialism, globalization and all other forms of white supremacy. In the spirit of movements like the Third World Liberation Front and the solidarity movements built amongst the Filipino-American and Mexican-American farm workers in 1965, we were inspired to form the APRFront coalition. We visualize a radical people-of-color led movement to be organized and structured with a revolutionary leadership that directs, coordinates, and strategically develops the revolutionary process while making power and building a new vision with the consensus of the masses. Part of people power is having multiple leaders from local, national, and global movements with a selfless passion for revolution and a deep devotion to the masses, as well as a strong understanding of strategic tactics needed to work with the masses and pave the road to revolution in line with our vision. We must also have

leaders who challenge the internalized colonization embedded within our educational institutions that reproduces inequity by controlling access to social mobility based on race, immigrant status, and class. When we reflect on the “leaderless” approach of Occupation, we find no space in which to honor our leaders of movements for radical change, and the masses that made their work possible. Although iconic figures like Martin Luther King Jr. inspired many Blacks, there were multiple unsung local leaders that built and sustained the movement. It was Black womyn leaders like Rosa Parks and Jo Ann Robinson that led the bus boycott before King led the Montgomery Improvement Association. It was the work of other womyn of color leaders like Dolores Huerta who played a huge role in farm worker organizing which eventually led her to co-founding the United Farm Workers with César Chavez, Philip Vera Cruz, and Larry Itliong. Gabriela Silang is another important figure who led an uprising in the Philippines against the Spanish imperialists, after her husband Diego Silang, who was the original leader of the movement, was killed. While there is more than one leader in mass movements for decolonization, it is important to realize that many leaders are also womyn of color who are often forgotten and unnoticed. The erasure of these herstories is one historical example of how patriarchy manifests, and a contemporary example concerns men, particularly white men, monopolizing Occupy movements and denying the voices of people and womyn of color.

As a solution and community-based effort, APRFront exercises deep organizing as an essential part of revolution and mass movement. Deep organizing can be attributed to our internal coalition practices and the everyday work folks within our com-



munities do to mobilize and educate our people: from the service workers who maintain our public spaces to the young teens who advocate transforming their gang community-family into social action, from the elders that make us meals and ensure we are well nourished to the Pelican Bay prisoners on hunger strike. We continuously work to embody the practice of acknowledging those within our movements who are behind the scenes contributing work that is often unrecognized. It was Ella Baker, an important Civil Rights leader who said, "I would rather pass the water to people marching, than hold the picket sign in the march."

APRFont struggles with the apparent high expectations within Occupy San Diego for communities of color to be present and consistently active with Occupation; however, this expectation fails to adequately address the reality of racial profiling, police brutality, the corrupt criminal justice system and the threat of deportation for both citizens of color and undocumented peoples. When considering issues of movement safety and participation in Occupy demonstrations, we understand the racial distinction between experiences with law enforcement in everyday situations and civil disobedience. While the theoretical purpose of law enforcement is to defend constitutional rights and humanity, this has been and continues to be untrue for communities of color. We've witnessed the unjust capital punishment in the legal lynching of Troy Davis which is deeply connected to the increasingly privatized prison industrial complex. Corrupt corporate greed is not exclusive to Wall Street: Corrections Corporation of America, Geo Group and Management and Training Corporation have made incarceration a profitable business, intentionally creating a system that imprisons people-of-color and specifically undocumented peoples to serve as present-day slave labor. We are not all protected equally by the police or paramilitary forces.

While we value protest as an integral part of revolution, we understand that we must also continue forth with long-term planning and deep organizing

practices. It is imperative to acknowledge that many people of color will be hesitant to attend Occupy demonstrations, while others are not at the capacity to be present due to poor health, being caretakers for their families, and/or just trying to survive everyday life. We also recognize that essential activism exists behind the gaze of the media and outside the realm of public visibility. All Peoples Revolutionary Front understands and encourages deep organizing, for it is the practice of taking care of each other, our families, our communities and the lands we live upon that contributes to a sustainable movement. While affirming our own present-day skills and knowledge, we organize in honor of our ancestors as an intentional practice to remember our histories, for they are often erased by white supremacy in popular movements. We have learned from our ancestors that a true mass movement can only be led by genuine revolutionary leaders. We also acknowledge that we have multiple leaders but we will not survive or succeed without the help of the people who organize, protest, and perform the same work. APRFont understands that without the masses, leaders would be nothing. And without sincere leaders, the masses would not be able to arrive at liberation. Leadership, the masses, and the vision are inseparable. They must be accountable to each other and must work in tandem in order to create a united front for true revolution. This is the movement in which we embrace, this is the movement in which we strive to become. This is the vision we seek.

We believe that intersecting legacies of injustice must be understood and brought in to dialogue in order to inform our movement. The colonial creation of Wall Street is evidence that an occupation has been taking place long before protesters in Zucotti park arrived. In the late 1600s, the Dutch colony located in the land presently called "New York" became the site of a fortification built under the direction of the Dutch West India Company with the labor of enslaved African peoples. Settlers erected this wall on Indigenous Lenape land to spe-

cifically prevent these peoples from "attacking" the land they originally inhabited. Manna-hata, meaning "island of many hills," was the Lenape term converted to "Manhattan" when translated into English. The stolen land surrounded by colonial borders would eventually translate into English as "Wall Street." Through neocolonial control, occupied cities and countries terrorized through war and illegal settlements continue to exist in the contemporary moment. Whether it is the militarized occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, the armed imposition of US forces in Libya, US government intervention in the affairs of the Philippines, the Israeli blockade of Gaza and the apartheid wall of the West Bank, or the violation of international law and false "statehood" voting which led to the colonization Hawaii, these geographies endure human rights abuses within systems of imperialism and conquest.

On the eve of the renewed police violence in Oakland, it is even more apparent that we must work towards a new vision for a socially just society and continue to engage in a process of decolonization and anti-oppression practices. This entails acknowledging that our current institutions have systematized inequality, oppression, and exploitation of people of color for the benefit of capital gain, expansion, and power. We cannot afford to reproduce the same system that is the root of our oppression if our intention is revolutionary liberation. Rather, we must be critical about our potential as agents of transformation and recognize ways that we further the oppression of people of color and Third World peoples.

In the strength of "making our own power", All Peoples Revolutionary Front has organized our own National Call to Action titled "Rise & Decolonize! Let's Get Free" on November 18, 2011 at 5:00 pm. We invite all those who have a genuine willingness to engage and listen to attend our solidarity rally, and become an ally to people of color in continuing the work of decolonization.

ALL
**TRICKLE
DOWN
MUST GO!**



WE ARE
BOTTOM UP

