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Astra Taylor

THE EVICTION

Last night, in what seems to be part of a coordinated crackdown on occupations across the country, Zuccotti Park was raided. Thousands of us who had subscribed to the text alert system, or who got emails or phone calls or panicked Twitter messages, went to Wall Street. But we could not get near the camp. Two blocks south of Liberty Plaza on Broadway, blocked by a police barricade that circled the whole area, I found myself part of a small crowd straining to see what was happening. In the distance, Zuccotti Park was lit like a sports field, glaring eerily, and I could make out a loudspeaker, blasting announcements and threats.

Sounds of people chanting and screaming floated towards us. While we paced the street, seething and sorrowful, tents were trampled, people's possessions piled up, and occupiers arrested. Later I would come across a camper I had met earlier in the day sobbing on the sidewalk. A few blocks west, maybe thirty minutes after I arrived, the police line broke so two huge dump trucks could pass through. So that was it: we, and everything we had made and were trying to make, were trash.

The authorities must be ashamed, because they so badly did not want anyone to see what happened last night. First they attacked the senses, flooding the park with bright light and using sound cannons. Then they corralled the press into pens, arrested reporters, and shut down airspace over lower Manhattan, so that no news stations could broadcast from above. As we strained our necks over their barricades they kept telling us that there was nothing to see. But clearly there was! We knew they were lying. And when we told them so, they, with batons in hand, forced us away. We were herded like sheep, and I felt like one, meekly following orders, a terrible coward. Those who resisted—those who stood their ground on a public sidewalk we all have a right to stand on—got maced in the face, right in the eyes. The authorities so badly did not want anyone to see what happened last night they were willing to temporarily blind us.

As the hours wore on, a single menacing helicopter hovered overhead, ominously tracking impromptu marches, which raced from Foley Square to Astor Place and back. At 3 AM I got separated from friends but realized I could use that helicopter as a beacon. I followed it up Centre and then crossed Houston just in time to see the cops, who had come in and filled maybe ten large vans, arresting a woman, twisting her arms painfully behind her back. "They're hurting me!" she screamed, and I winced. An officer told a group of us, who were gawking from across the street, to "get a job." As I approached Bleeker, the protesters were being forced east by a swarm of police;

they were outnumbered, easily, two to one.

"What are they so afraid of?" my companion asked when we first arrived at Wall Street just after 1 AM, and as I watched this excessive use of force the question kept ringing in my ears. But the answer is obvious: they are afraid of us. "This peaceful uprising against our sickening plutocracy has them quaking with fear," a friend remarked later, proud and surprised. They say we are just a bunch of hippies ineffectually camping out. But if that's really what they think, why do they need guns and nightsticks and Long Range Acoustic Devices and paramilitary aircraft? We should take heart. If we make them so afraid, we must not be as weak as I often worry we are.

MARK GREIF

Open Letter

Dear Police,

You keep inserting yourself and distracting OWS. Could you please stay home? The conflict is between American citizens and concentrations of wealth, and the government hangs in the balance between them. But you keep pushing in and trying to fight, or beat people up, as I saw you do last night, or just throw your weight around, needlessly, and waste our time. It's narcissistic. It's tiring to even think about you. What last night's wastefulness reminded me is that I need to stop defending you, or worrying about your humanity and underlying goodness, or your possibility of recognizing your places as citizens, too. All that would be nice to think about. But I was reminded, looking at you, that every one of us is still responsible, and everyone has a choice finally, to obey or disobey, to do wrong or right. You abdicate that choice; that doesn't mean you have to ruin it for the rest of America. I believe that when your Officer Cho was leaning on my chest last night with a plastic police shield, to clear room for pedestrians who didn't exist, on an empty sidewalk at 1 AM in the Financial District, pushing hard with a line of his coworkers on a crowd of us, all of whom actually were pedestrians on that sidewalk, as he and I were locked in place, he said to me, from behind his plastic visor, where he could watch us all as if on television, or in his car, so he didn't have to think, this phrase: "It's a game." "What?" I said. "We push you back, you push us back. We're both doing our jobs. A game." No. It's not. So get out of the way.

Incidentally, I saw two chants give you pause last night. "This—is—a peaceful—pro-test" was one; you all stopped shoving us and stood there like blue clad mannequins. Why did that paralyze you—because you're telling yourself in your head that you're fighting violence, to do what you do? The other was sad:

"Police—protect—the 1 per-cent." You were standing, twenty of you, defending an empty street with bank skyscrapers rising out of it. You don't belong in those skyscrapers. You knew it too.

MARCO ROTH

Mayor Bloomberg's Language

A massive police action undertaken in the middle of the night against an unarmed, defenseless, and mostly sleeping group, with the aim of their forcible removal and the incidental destruction of most of their personal property was ordered, we learned, ostensibly in the name of "guaranteeing public health and safety." Why in the middle of the night? "This action was taken at this time of day to reduce the risk of confrontation, and to minimize disruption to the surrounding neighborhood." By the same logic, a thief breaks into a house at an hour when its residents are least expected to be home, or least ready for confrontation, so as not to raise the alarm and bring out the neighbors. A surprise attack by an overwhelming force is not the action of a brave man, nor of a man entirely sure of himself. Surprise is the weapon of the weak, but has been chosen by the strongest in the name of minimization and harm reduction, the language of risk management, imported into a political arena, an arena for the struggle of ideas and concepts, from the realm of economics, the household, where the financial sector's failure to minimize risk and reduce potential harm led us directly to the crisis that caused the mayor to call out the armored might of the NYPD to quash a bunch of campers, kick over their tents like sandcastles, destroy a library of over 5,000 books, and throw away countless personal possessions, each of which had a story of its own, all so that a neighborhood may not "be disrupted."

But what is a neighborhood? Who decides what belongs there and what doesn't? The mayor knows and the mayor decides: "There have been reports of businesses being threatened and complaints about noise and unsanitary conditions that have seriously impacted the quality of life for residents and businesses in this now-thriving neighborhood." Vague reports, vague threats: this does not even rise to the level of the terrible phrases foisted on the public in recent years, like "credible intelligence." And oh, the noise, the "unsanitary conditions," that have made businesses unhappy, "quality of life," a phrase popularized by Bloomberg's precursor, Rudy Giuliani, but remains no clearer today than in 1993: it's a phrase that simultaneously encapsulates and occludes the very struggle at issue in Zuccotti Park. What does it mean to live

a life of qualities? Is quality, by definition immeasurable, only describable, something that can be charted by the cleanliness of a street, the absence of certain smells, certain people? Is the absence of dirt, smells, noise, and people what the mayor means by "thriving?" Is there really a right not to see certain things, and can the mayor of New York City destroy individual property in its name?

Alas, this property was erected on a too-fragile foundation: "The law that created Zuccotti Park required that it be open for the public to enjoy for passive recreation 24 hours a day." "Passive recreation," another phrase that sums up Bloomberg's New York. This is bureau-speak to say that you can't play a game of touch football in Zuccotti Park, but why not apply it more broadly, for instance, to the making of speeches and the holding of assemblies? Is that a violation of the passivity or the recreation, or both?

"Ever since the occupation began, that law has not been complied with, as the park has been taken over by protesters, making it unavailable to anyone else." Here begins a litany of charges against the protesters, which, as they multiply, become increasingly incoherent and contradictory. This first count is purely tendentious: the park was not "unavailable to anyone else" until the police themselves erected barricades around it. Maybe it was a less nice place to walk your dog or take a lunch break than it used to be. There were funny people and they smelled funny, and they had to shout over the drum circle, but the City of New York has no problems telling people where they can and cannot walk their dogs and where they can and cannot have lunch, smoke cigarettes, make out, et cetera. The protesters barred no one entry to the park, a fact that the police would use against them to encourage drug users and drinkers, as the *New York Daily News* reported, to "take it to Zuccotti," helping to create the very conditions the mayor cites in his brief; the protesters threatened instead what the City of New York views as its sovereign right to control the use of space.

But that's not the real reason that the riot gear and the bulldozers and the helicopter and the floodlights were called out at 1 AM on November 15th. "I have said that the City had two principal goals: guaranteeing public health and safety, and guaranteeing the protesters' First Amendment rights. But when those two goals clash, the health and safety of the public and our first responders must be the priority." No, no . . . it was all about health and safety first! Not, however, the health and safety of the protesters, who were somehow seen as alien to the public. One way to correct the prospective imbalance between First Amendment rights and the nebulous right to public safety would have been to allow the protesters to erect winterized structures and ensure they had adequate access to clean bathrooms and did not have to rely on the strained good-will of local businesses. That would have minimized the risk of disease, of a tubercular protester, god-forbid, spitting

near an area where a resident of a thriving neighborhood might walk.

The city did not do this. Instead, the mayor explains, in the interest of public health and safety, “several weeks ago the City acted to remove generators and fuel that posed a fire hazard from the park.” Recall that they did this several hours before a snowstorm had been forecast. To cause people to freeze in the name of public health, to cry fire when the danger is from cold, that’s humane and responsible governance.

The mayor’s final justification, however, rests simply on a diktat, “make no mistake—the final decision to act was mine . . .” followed by another round of confusing double-speak, “I could not wait for someone in the park to get killed or to injure another first responder before acting. Others have cautioned against action because enforcing our laws might be used by some protesters as a pretext for violence—but we must never be afraid to insist on compliance with our laws.” First the mayor says that he could not wait for an actual law to be broken, for instance manslaughter or homicide, so he acts preventively on the suspicion that a law could at any moment be broken. This is the logic that leads to thought-crime, unless of course one believes that there’s an imminent menace. True there have been sexual assaults and theft and drug use in the park, but this is true of other neighborhoods in New York as well. The city does not raze a city block because a rape occurs in a building. Zuccotti Park, however, became the most-policed ground in the country. From the beginning it was treated as an enemy zone, subjected to a level of scrutiny that most of us only have nightmares about. But then the mayor insists the midnight assault was all about compliance with existing laws, presumably the one enforcing “passive recreation,” or the various anti-homeless statutes. Hero of crime prevention or bureaucrat of enforcement, both sides are present, neither convinces. What emerges between the lines is the invocation of “pretext to violence.” Bloomberg attributes the violence to the protesters and the thought to some mysterious, unnamed “others,” but to anyone who has been following the city’s campaign against the protesters from the beginning, it’s clear that what the mayor was casting about for was precisely a pretext, and a pretext to do exactly what he did last night: raze the park in the most aggressive way possible, through maximum force projection, and under a media blackout, staking everything on the hope that the protesters would behave peacefully, in exactly the opposite way that he would later characterize them. Why was the media blocked? Says Bloomberg, “[We had to] protect the members of the press. We have to provide protection and we have done exactly that.”

The overall tone of Bloomberg’s statement takes us back directly to the chaotic and terrified New York after September 11, 2001, and what only a handful of principled civil libertarians then feared in that peculiar state of emergency has largely come to pass: a police force swollen by Homeland Security investments no longer knows how to deal with citizens as citizens, visualizing them instead as threats; a national security godfather state has replaced the language of law with the rhetoric of sovereign “Public Safety,” a political idea rooted in Jacobin paranoia and the Terror; and when disputes over

law and the public good arise they are increasingly settled by the arbitrary decisions of an executive power simultaneously terrified of appearing weak and of showing its might in the fair light of day.

What the press and the public at large have been protected from, in fact, is an opportunity to participate in understanding their own history. Last night’s action was not an attempt at law enforcement or protection: it was an effort to erase the last two months in Zuccotti Park. The midnight raid wasn’t just cowardice, it was the fantastical act of a tyrant who believes he can wipe the slate clean, and so exact revenge for slights to his power. To look at images of the park as it appeared after the cleanup, or with the army of orange-vested sanitation workers with their power-hoses, is to glimpse Bloomberg’s utopia, a semi-public space that is meant to be always and utterly vacant of meaning and content and individual associations, a plaything put away for the night.

Kathleen Ross Arrested

The night before the two-month anniversary of Occupy Wall Street on November 17, an activist emailed our OWS listserv with information about a direct action scheduled to begin at 7 AM the next morning. In an effort to delay the opening bell, protesters would block the entrance to the New York Stock Exchange. Some would form “soft barricades” near particular police gates. Our correspondent described a training session in which participants role-played protester and cop: she locked arms with her neighbors while another volunteer made the arrest. “I went limp as she yanked me up and over and dragged me across the floor. So now I know what that’s like!” I read through the instructions—wear running shoes, dress in layers, consider carrying a 1:1 solution of water and Mylanta (to counteract pepper spray)—and set my alarm for 6:30 AM.

Our group met in Zuccotti Park and marched together to the Exchange. We made our way down the sheltered one-ways, weaving around metal barriers and parked police trucks. A line of traffic tried to inch past the protesters. I hurried further down William Street—there was promise of a dance party around the corner—but a friend called us back to the intersection of William and Pine. People had formed a standing barricade blocking traffic in front of the police gates. Keith and Eli had linked arms in the crosswalk. I hopped off the sidewalk and joined them in the street. Another member of the group, Sarah, appeared at my side, breathlessly apologizing, “Sorry! I got swept away with some anarchists.”

You shift around a lot in a crowd. At first, I was further forward, in the middle of the street, but after some reshuffling found myself standing in the crosswalk with Sarah. When the cops approached in helmets and with bundles of zip cuffs in hand, we linked arms and sat down. “Cops take off your riot gear / I don’t see no riot here.”

The guy in the blue windbreaker playing the drums and leading occasional mic checks was the first to be arrested. He

struggled—more than others would—and flipped over, kicking a woman in the face in the process. The group scooted forward together. (Who knew there would be scooting in the revolution?) Since we were sitting in the fourth or fifth line back, I couldn’t see a protester once he or she was on the ground. I took cues from the crowd to understand how serious each arrest was (did people scream at the cop? did reporters take photographs or raise their TV cameras?) and to gauge if the police officers’ moods were deteriorating, if we were in danger of a cop losing it. I did watch as a woman reared back and spat in an officer’s face as they loaded her into one of the higher security paddywagons. Within fifteen minutes, the first line of the barricade was broken. Orphaned cardboard signs littered the pavement. Keith and Eli walked into the middle of the street and sat down. The police separated them, pulling Keith away and cuffing him face-down on the ground. As the two were led to separate police vans, I ran through a mental checklist: I had no priors. I wouldn’t need to call into work—one of my bosses had just been arrested and another was a bystander on the curb. I was ahead on my work for the day. I had eaten a good breakfast! I texted my co-worker that it was likely I would be arrested and scrawled the Lawyer’s Guild telephone number on my arm.

“Who do you protect? Who do you serve?” We watched and waited. Cops slowly picked off people, one by one, two to four cops surrounding each protester. The crowd chanted “Shame!” at every rough arrest. A few of the people with us scurried away, to find siblings or catch a train, because they had prior arrests or carried records from underage drinking. I stayed with Sarah. Slowly, the street began to empty as the people around us were pulled up. A woman in a wheelchair with a flag—a disabled activist who frequently shows up to protests explicitly to get arrested—stayed next to Sarah and said, “Hold onto my chair. It makes the cops really nervous.”

Finally I was approached and asked if I wanted to comply. “We can do this the easy way,” the cop promised. I didn’t answer and kept my head down. “Okay,” he said and pulled my arm. I was flipped onto my stomach and zip-cuffed. I didn’t know how to struggle or put up a fight beyond that initial resistance. Where should my arms flail? Two officers lifted me to my feet.

My arresting officer took my information (“You’re from Maine? What are you doing in New York?”) and kept telling the other policemen that he got my name and “pedigree.” Sarah and I were grouped together, and an officer took a Polaroid of us with our arresting officer. I think they were using the photos to keep the paperwork straight—easier to match faces than names and badge numbers. Again he said “pedigree,” and I had to assume that was code for “nice” and “non-threatening.” Our arresting officer told us he’d been awake for over 24 hours.

Somehow, Sarah managed to tweet “In a police van” with her hands still cuffed behind her back. We zoomed down Canal Street, using sirens to blow through stoplights. When asked by a protester in the back of the van what the police thought of Occupy Wall Street, the officer in the passenger seat got annoyed and flashed us a picture of his kid on his phone, whose school parade he was missing.

Sarah, the anarchist, and I were some of the first twenty arrestees to be processed that morning. At the women’s cell block, our cuffs were cut off. We were patted down, my earplugs falling to the ground as they cleaned out my pockets. A trash can was filled with zip cuffs and water bottles. Male arresting officers, their hands full of paperwork, were sent away by the female officers to fetch more and different forms. “Did you get the...?” “Was there a...?” “Did she...?” It was early in the day—a day with more protests planned—and already they seemed overwhelmed by the sheer amount of administrative work.

Sarah and I had a holding cell—number 4—to ourselves. We were lucky: other girls were packed six to a cell, each one containing only a single cot, a sink, and a toilet.

“Mic-check!” a girl started down the cell block.

“Mic-check!” we responded, women’s voices echoing off the concrete.

“Does anyone need...?”

“Does anyone need...?”

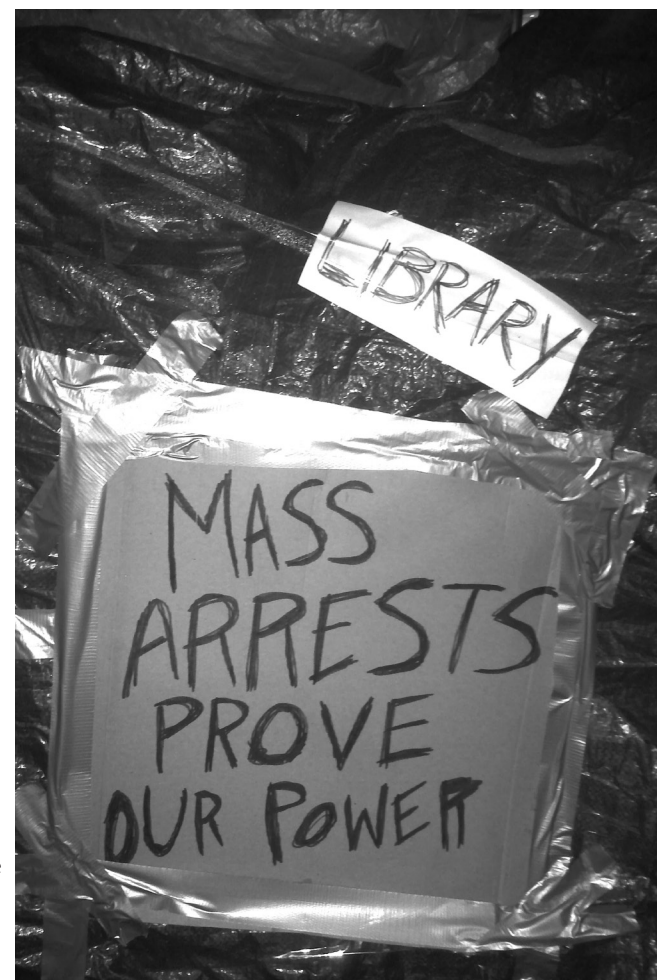
“The Lawyer’s Guild Number?”

“The Lawyer’s Guild Number?”

“Yes!” replied a woman in the neighboring cell.

The mic-check proceeded for several more rounds. We asked if anyone knew the time, we questioned later arrestees what news there was from outside, and finally sang OWS “Happy Birthday” (“and many more...” tacked sweetly to the end).

I got out that day. Back at my office, I wrote an email, encouraging friends to join us at Foley Square that evening, closing: “As my arresting officer said, see you at the bridge.”



JEREMY KESSLER

THIS IS WHAT NONVIOLENCE LOOKS LIKE

Just after 7 AM on Thursday, November 17, hundreds of protesters marched from Zuccotti Park, the scene of a massive police eviction two days earlier, into the warren of streets that surround the New York Stock Exchange. It was the two-month anniversary of Occupy Wall Street, and an entire "Day of Action" was in the works. For the early morning event, marchers hoped to reach Wall Street itself, or as near to Wall Street as they could get given the metal barricades, police vans, motorcycles, and riot police that have effectively privatized that narrow strip of land. It was perhaps the movement's most carefully orchestrated nonviolent action—though you might not have known it from watching the news that day.

For many days prior to November 17, occupiers had met to map out the multiple stages of the action, noting the

intersections where police would try to bottleneck marchers and devising routes of retreat that would allow them to regroup when faced with overwhelming police force. In order to spread out the police presence, they planned to stagger the march; sections would leave minutes apart and aim for different access points to Wall Street. With these general contours in mind, over a dozen affinity groups—self-organizing sets of volunteers—met to plan actions within the action: some would break off from the main march to proceed directly to Wall Street through a Duane Reade on Pine; others planned acts of civil disobedience at strategic locations.

The unpredictable movements and the "diversity of tactics" employed by the occupiers—from traditional civil disobedience to absurd dance routines—frequently cause police, spoiled by total compliance, to become panicked or enraged. As a result, the police did as much as the marchers to block access to Wall Street, manhandling pedestrians and "freezing" intersections in order to stanch the unpredictable flow of protest. Perhaps the chief breakdown of police control occurred around 10 AM at the intersection of Broad and Beaver, where several strands of the march met after earlier sit-ins on Pine Street. Unprepared for this secondary flow, the police initially allowed

the marchers to take to the street, dancing and singing. Then some creative officers transformed a metal barricade into a plow, using it to sweep up or knock down protesters.

Although this carnival of nonviolent force and violent counter-force attracts media attention, reporters have not quite come around to the stark imbalance between the nonviolence of the protesters and the oppressive reactions of the police. On Thursday afternoon, press reports became surreally fixated on a single act of violence that occurred back at Zuccotti Park, hours after the morning action. Apparently a lone protester threw a mysterious "star-shaped glass object" at a police officer. At some point in its flight, the star cut Officer Matthew Walters's hand, and he went to the hospital for twenty stitches. Sharp, if vague, the glass weapon soared above the hundreds of thousands of words written about the "Day of Action," as if it were a premonition of future assaults. As Mayor Michael Bloomberg stood flanked by white-coated doctors at Bellevue Hospital to update the press on Officer Walters's hand, photos circulated of a protester with blood pouring down his face. Reporters quickly explained why the 20-year-old boy deserved a cracked head: he had thrown an AAA battery at one police officer and stolen the hat off

another officer's head. If a bloody face is what you get when you throw a battery, one shudders to imagine what will happen if the police find the elusive star-hurler.

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The over-reporting of protester violence has many causes, but two have loomed largeduring the last several weeks: the divergent organizations of policing and protest on the one hand, and the professionalized relationship between the police and the press on the other.

First, any instance of protester violence creates the illusion of an easily grasped, symmetrical conflict: person versus personone with a glass star, the other with a polymer club. There is something much more difficult to capture about a prolonged yet asymmetrical conflict—an entire police force, with military armaments and intelligence operatives, enacting a strategy of suppression over several months against a shifting, unarmed collective. While there has been some insightful coverage of the composition and the tactics of the occupation (for months, all reporters had to do was go down to the Zuccotti and ask around), reporting from within the corridors of One Police Plaza has been almost non-existent. The secrecy and complexity of police operations—symptoms of an increasingly militarized

OCCUPY ON CAMPUS

RACHEL SIGNER

The New School in Exile, Revisited

I arrived at the New School in the fall of 2008 to do a master's degree in anthropology. Tuition was \$23,000 per year—this did not include room or board—but the opportunity to be in a great intellectual community appeased my anxiety about the cost. A little bit.

Tuition was high for a reason: the school, I soon learned, was on shaky financial footing. Founded in 1933 as a refuge for scholars fleeing Fascism and Nazism in Europe, it wasn't the sort of place that produced the sort of people who turned around and gave their alma mater millions of dollars. The endowment was meager, and the school relied on tuition for revenue.

The New School needed to improve its financial situation and its status, and it was going to do it, like any New York institution, through real estate. They were going to tear down one of the original 1930s buildings and replace it with a state-of-the-art gleaming sixteen-story tower, home to studios for

designers and artists studying at the New School's profitable design institute, Parsons, and laboratories (for whom, no one could tell you; the New School offers no courses in hard sciences), retail food vendors, apartments, and—most insulting of all, I think, to the symbolics heirs, as we liked to consider ourselves, of refugees from fascism—a fitness center. At the time, the building, at 65 Fifth Avenue, was a multi-purpose meeting place where graduate students could read quietly, have lunch in the café, or find books in the basement library. There had been classrooms upstairs, but at that point they had already been relocated to the Minimalist-style building a few blocks away where my department, Anthropology, was crammed together with Sociology.

Nobody liked the idea of a new building; we thought the old building was perfectly fine, for one thing, and for another we thought the money could be better spent on fellowships for debt-saddled students (like me!). The campus was in an uproar already after the faculty senate, enraged that the university's president, Bob Kerrey, had, after his fifth successive provost left the job, simply assumed the post himself, passed a unanimous no-confidence vote against him. Shortly after news got around about the faculty vote, an unofficial student meeting was called. There were fliers posted around campus by the Radical Student Union. About fifty of us gathered in the basement of the new graduate building on 16th Street. A piece of butcher paper was thrown up on the wall, and a list of demands was produced: we wanted Kerrey and his vice-president, Jim Murtha, to resign; a new provost selected by the student body; a transparent academic budget; and, later, we added one demand that propelled us to action: that the demolishing and "capital improvement" of 65 Fifth be cancelled.

Most of the meeting's attendees were graduate students in the Social Research division, notably more interested in radical politics than, say, students at Parsons. The meeting was led by a tall, skinny Philosophy graduate named Jacob, and a chain-smoking Politics student with deep bags under her eyes named Fatuma. Before the meeting started, Jacob passed around a pamphlet he'd written about direct action as he munched, ostentatiously, on some dumpster-dived bananas. "I think it's time," he said, as we convened in the basement, "for an action." Another of the leaders was Tim, a gruff, shaggy-haired guy from the Poli-Sci department, who sneered a bit when people's comments seemed too moderate.

At this meeting, two actions were proposed. The first was directed at an upcoming meeting Kerrey had convened with the faculty, presumably to try to convince them to reverse the no-confidence vote. We, the students, had not been invited, and our plan was to show up wearing duct tape over our mouths. The next action would be some kind of sit-in, or occupation. We wrote down our emails and walked back out into the night—revolutionaries.

urban security apparatus—are major obstacles to reportage.

Not only is the decision-making center of police operations resistant to investigation, but so is the experience of the beat cop on the line. The intensely hierarchical structure of policing means that low-level police officers are both operationally in the dark and chronically afraid of being disciplined. The average protester on the other hand, is empowered and talkative. She may be about to lead an act of civil-disobedience or go on a rant about corporate power. This volatility makes it easy to cover the protester, but it also makes it easy to blame her: it is tempting to trace the eruption of violence on the street to the energetic protester rather than the dour cop. Yet it was the police whose dour wave of billy clubs confronted protesters' nonviolent antics.

Another obstacle to clear-headed reporting of police violence is the formal relationship between the police and the press. At a protest, the reporter with a police-issued press pass is often the only American citizen who can expect robust First Amendment protections. Traditionally, a press pass has emancipated the beat reporter; it gives her a kind of official dignity, indeed, a badge. As many First Amendment scholars have pointed out, there is something bizarre about this phenomenon. The freedom of the press should not attach to a kind of employment, but to a kind of activity. The professionalization of freedom of the press, in this sense, is one more example of the privatization of the public sphere that occupiers protest. Indeed, it is

anti-democratic for one group of citizens, in virtue of their private employment, to gain a whole slew of extra rights vis-à-vis the police. This anti-democratic distribution of rights may well distort reporting, as it makes the ability to report a function of the order created by police power. The more the police control a crowd, the easier it is for the press to cover it, as long as reporters retain their privileged status above the masses, a privilege the police itself provides.

In recent weeks we have seen the NYPD correct this peculiar inequality on the streets of Manhattan, as they knocked down and locked up reporters, press pass or no. What's more, the police department clarified that it would not hand out press passes for the purposes of covering Occupy Wall Street. Such preemptive denial of the freedom of press to everyone—even to that special breed of citizen called "journalists"—was a striking example of the de rigueur denial of basic civil rights that some Americans experience on a near-daily basis. In treating reporters like protesters, the police seemed to have lifted the professional veil that generally keeps their more violent tactics out of the papers. Four days after Thursday morning's march, the *New York Times* and a dozen other news outlets fired off a protest to the NYPD: "The police actions of last week have been more hostile to the press than any other event in recent memory." The letter recounted a scene from Thursday when police officers used a metal barricade to beat a photographer trying to snap a picture. Perhaps they had mistaken the flash-bulb for a flying star.

The duct-tape action was a smashing success; many of our faculty members threw their fists up at us, and a buzz went around campus. Meanwhile, our planning meetings for the occupation continued, as quietly as possible—which later would be cause for our fellow students to accuse us of exclusivity. The truth is we didn't want to get busted. Then, late in the afternoon on December 17th, about sixty of us gathered in the cafeteria at 65 Fifth, a room with glass walls on three sides and, in the back, a little deli that sold terrible sandwiches and coffee. Round tables and chairs were strewn throughout the room. We lounged casually, as if having coffee with friends, as we knew that the administration had, through some whistleblower, caught wind of our scheme. Then, at a designated time, I think around 6pm, we stood up on the tables, taped banners with "NEW SCHOOL OCCUPIED" to the walls, pushed chairs against the main entrance, and probably began chanting something, or cheering.

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I'm not sure at what point we came up with the name "New School in Exile," but it stuck. It was, of course, a reference to the proud history of the institution, its birth as a place of exile. And not only that. When I'd told my parents that I was planning to go do a master's at The New School, I learned that my grandparents had taken continuing education courses there, and my grandmother had also been a secretary for one of the deans.

They were both mostly self-educated. My grandfather had been expelled from City College in the nineteen-thirties for protesting against Fascism in Europe, then gone on to become a journalist for *The Daily Worker*; my grandmother, who knew Italian and Spanish, had been a union organizer. In *Specters of Marx*, which I read in my second year of graduate school (by which point I was about \$30,000 in the hole), Derrida talks about the ghostly nature of politics, how it moves in cycles. That night, as hundreds of New School, CUNY, and NYU students gathered outside the building, on Fifth Avenue, sending us tweets and text messages of solidarity, and as we huddled inside, writing our list of demands, I felt my grandparents' ghosts inside me, in that building, likely the very same one where they had read philosophy and sociology and tried to channel those ideas into creating a better world.

That night we put up our new "New School in Exile" banners, and a blog was created in that name by a politics student named Scott. Scott, it must be said, was a Leninist, which pissed everybody off and made us worried,

Keith Gessen

"N17"

Was there any point to trying to shut down the NYSE? Most of the really nefarious stuff, the credit default swaps and options and so on, is not traded publicly. That's the whole problem with it, and the big investment banks fought tooth and nail to keep it that way during the fight over financial regulation. If it's being traded in public, in fact, it can't be that bad.

And most of the people making their way to work that day, whose progress we slowed a little bit—these were not the masters of the universe. If you have to show up at 8 am at the NYSE and spend the day yelling orders at a broker, chances are you're not the guy who breaks national

currencies and shorts entire economic sectors.

After we were arrested and taken to the Tombs, we got periodic updates, over the phone, about what had happened outside. One of the drug dealers we were in with called his girlfriend, who works for the MTA—we occupied the subway, he said. People cheered. And one of the protesters called a friend: The opening bell of the stock exchange was fifteen minutes late! We cheered some more and high-fived.

It turned out not to be true. The stock exchange opened on time, and shares of companies were exchanged, short positions taken, options called—and good for them. But you have to start somewhere. Some of what Wall Street does is valuable and important; some of it, as in most industries, is neutral and irrelevant and just wheel-spinning; and a certain portion of what it does should be illegal. Everyone on Wall Street knows this. I think what we were saying is that we now know it too.

because he was our media guy. But for the moment, things were great. Someone from the *New York Times* came in to report on us—at this point the administration was letting people enter and leave the building at will—and an organization from Harlem sent food. Jim Murtha, our vice-president, showed up, with alcohol on his breath, and we booed him. Some NYPD entered and hovered in the lobby near the front door, chatting with the security guards. As the morning hours approached, we played music on our laptops, made signs about neoliberalism and student debt, and worked on our final papers, which were due that week, and most of which were probably about Marx. Some of us slept, a little, on the floor.

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The next day, people began coming from all over campus and other universities to show their support or just check us out. A sign saying "New School: OCCUPIED" had miraculously appeared on the outside of our building, a couple of stories up; people sent us photos via cell phone. I also learned that many of my fellow students in the Anthropology department were unsure what to think. There was a sense that our faculty were not enthusiastic about the occupation, and grad students concerned about keeping good relations with them (who wasn't, really?) were hesitant to align themselves with the New School in Exile. Regardless, some of my colleagues, and students from other departments and the undergraduate divisions, showed up at 65 Fifth for the afternoon meeting on the second day.

We proved to be totally unprepared for this. As a large group of students gathered chairs in a circle, expecting to learn our plan for getting the administration to cave in to our demands, I looked around and realized that I was the only organizer in sight. Where were Jacob, Fatuma, Tim, and Scott the Leninist? Gone. I looked at the gaggle of bright-eyed but uncertain students, threw up some butcher paper on the wall, ripped off my sweater as I began to sweat profusely with anxiety, grabbed a marker, and began to solicit agenda items from the crowd.

Thankfully, someone sensed my confusion and stepped in to help: it was the anthropologist David Graeber. Many New School students knew him through his previous work with the New York Direct Action Network, and they had called him in to help. He gave us a brief workshop on democratic consensus-building, and then stepped aside. And then we were doing it. I facilitated, and people wiggled their fingers, and we moved through our agenda items. We talked about the cafeteria workers, who we wanted to make sure were not losing a day's wages because of our protest, and decided this should be high on the list of our demands. We discussed other things. It was exhilarating to be using this new language, with our hands, to hold a discussion. Soon, meetings were popping up throughout the day in that room, all using the consensus procedures. Graeber moved in and out silently, hardly making his presence known.

Finally, the missing organizers from earlier returned to join the rest of us. They told us they'd learned that, all over the city, anarchist networks had

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Karen Smith

THE LEGAL ISSUES OF ZUCCOTTI PARK

In the early morning hours of November 15, 2011, the New York City Police Department, under the direction of New York City's mayor, Michael Bloomberg, carried out a stealth attack to evict the occupiers at Zuccotti Park. Soon afterward, lawyers on both sides fashioned arguments as to whether the eviction of the occupiers—and the banning of tents, sleeping bags, or any other items which would make it possible for the occupiers to remain through a cold winter—violated their First Amendment rights.

By 6:30 a.m., the lawyers representing OWS were able to obtain a temporary restraining order (TRO), issued by Justice Lucy Billings, that prohibited the City from barring the protesters from the park and permitted them to reenter with their tents and sleeping bags. The Order would remain in effect until 11:30 a.m. at which time a hearing would determine if the TRO should be continued. The case was then reassigned, allegedly, to the next judge “on the wheel,” a practice followed by the Courts when a TRO is obtained after-hours.

At approximately 12:00 p.m., Justice Stallman heard oral arguments from lawyers representing both sides. Later that afternoon, Justice Stallman issued a decision granting the protesters the right to continue their protest in the park, but denied them the right to bring their tents

and sleeping bags with them or to remain overnight. Justice Stallman held that the First Amendment does not include the right to have the accoutrements (sleeping bags and tents) which enable people to exercise their first amendment rights. It appears that he may now even be prepared to hold that the First Amendment does not apply to Zuccotti Park as it is not a “public” park.

Between the time the City was served with Justice Billings original TRO and the time Justice Stallman issued his decision, the City refused to follow the directives of Justice Billings' order, denying protesters the right of re-entry to the Park. After Justice Stallman issued his order, the City, without any authority, constructed barricades around the park and searched anyone attempting to enter it, a practice which continues to this date.

In all likelihood the lawyers representing OWS asked the legal working group what they hoped to accomplish with the lawsuit. Questions about how important it was to get OWS back into Zuccotti Park and how soon they needed that to happen were probably discussed. The attorneys probably analyzed the likelihood that such relief could be won (in light of previous decisions made by the New York and federal courts which define the area of First Amendment law), the prior decisions by Justice Stallman, and the slowness of the legal system.

Lawsuits take time and money and are a drain, especially when the deck is stacked against you. Before entering into a law suit, people should be clear about the suit's aims. Is it: publicity, re-dress of some wrong, financial recompense, to buy time, to gain allies, to isolate your enemies, or to expose contradictions?

In the Zuccotti Park case, given all the elements just mentioned, focusing on

the illegality of the City's enforcement of Brookfield Properties' private property rights would have been a good way to go forward. I am not suggesting that this argument would have “won” the day, or that Justice Stallman would have held that the de facto lockout was illegal, but in the context of a political lawsuit, the goal of “winning” must be re-examined. Focusing on the illegality of public enforcement of private property rights would serve to support OWS's message about how the 99% has been systematically screwed by exposing a Mayor serving the interests of the 1% (he himself being among the 10 richest people in the country, in a percentage smaller than the 1%).

The City maintains that it stepped in to remove the protesters pursuant to its “general police powers” to protect the health and safety of its citizens, which were threatened, among other things, by the alleged unsafe and unsanitary conditions in the park, and to enforce the park rules issued by Brookfield Properties at their request.

The City has to argue that its actions fell within their general police powers to protect the public as there is no other legal basis for the City's actions. If an owner wishes to evict someone from their property, they have to bring a proceeding or an action. If it is a squatter (a legal, not moral term), as in this case, the owner has to bring an “ejectment action” in State Supreme Court (as there is no landlord-tenant relationship. If there were a landlord-tenant relationship, the landlord would have to commence a proceeding in Housing Court.) Even if Brookfield had commenced the appropriate action, the NYPD probably could not evict. It would be the City Marshall who would evict, and then only after there had been issued a decision by a Court, after a hearing or trial was held, and then, only after a warrant was issued and served on the Marshall. Even more importantly, the law of this State has been settled for over sixty years: no violence can be used to carry out an eviction.

So we are left with the City's claim that it was authorized to remove the protesters pursuant to its general police powers. However, an examination of the facts in the case shows otherwise. We must not ignore the Mayor's admission, on prime

time television, that Brookfield did not ask for the City's intervention until after the Mayor and his Police Commissioner had already decided, over the November 12th /13th weekend, to evict the protesters and that the “request” to intervene was solicited by the Mayor. Also, not to be ignored is that the so called “rules” allegedly issued by the owners of Zuccotti Park, which the City offered to enforce, were changed after the occupation started but before the eviction, possibly in anticipation of the eviction. The entire rationale by the City is questionable when one considers that after the attack at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, when the conditions in lower Manhattan were undisputedly unsafe and unsanitary, the City encouraged people to return to their homes and work despite the deplorable conditions resulting from the attack.

One of the most curious aspects of the case, however, is Justice Stallman's failure to hold an evidentiary hearing on the allegation that there were unsafe and unsanitary conditions in the park sufficient to justify the City's actions. When I retired as an Acting New York State Supreme Court Justice (in September 2010), I was the senior judge in the City Part, handling cases to which the City was a party. I handled many TROs against the City, as did the two other judges who were assigned to that Part. While there are no hard and fast rules, the vast majority of us would have held a hearing to determine if the allegations of “unsafe” and “unsanitary” conditions were supported by evidence. Such evidence would be in the form of documents and sworn testimony where each side would be given the right to call witnesses and cross examine the other side's witnesses. The submission of sworn written affidavits alone, would not have been enough. Absent such a hearing, the claims are merely unproven allegations, and thus insufficient to justify the City's actions.

Nor is there any justification for the City and its police to have totally ignored Justice Lucy Billings' TRO. The City was legally served with the order, but blatantly ignored it claiming that “The City was seeking clarification of the order.” What the City was apparently seeking was the reassignment of the case to a judge more sympathetic to its position.

mobilized and were ready, were near the school even, waiting, to join us. They wanted to come in that night. We discussed it; I remember not liking the idea, but I can't remember why. Eventually we voted it down. It didn't matter. At around 1 AM on the second night of the occupation, about one hundred and fifty people, with Mohawks and patched-together cargo pants and Doc Martens, came pouring into the building. Graeber had found a side entrance unguarded by the security guards. As the students ran in, the guards attempted to stop them, throwing them up against the wall or grabbing at their limbs, but the anarchists pushed through and nearly every single one of them made it into the cafeteria, where we were cheering. We hadn't liked the idea, but now, we felt, we were stronger. There were over two hundred of us. The negotiations were continuing with the administration. We felt that it was possible we would succeed.

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Eventually the security guards in the lobby, outside the cafeteria, stopped letting people enter and leave the building. We had enough food and water to last us awhile, and we were energized by our recent growth in numbers. Negotiations were going on in a reading room off the cafeteria between, on our side, Fatuma and some of the other main organizers, and a few selected representatives from the administration and the faculty. Even as the police grew stricter, though, we were still fairly casual about venturing out of the cafeteria to the bathrooms, which were located right outside the cafeteria doors. Then, on the third night of the occupation, the police walked over to the bathrooms, and planted themselves in front of them. There would be no more free pass to the bathrooms. This had not occurred to us. They'd found our blind spot.

People immediately began talking about building a compost toilet with paper walls in the back of the cafeteria. Hey, it was more eco-friendly, anyway! Other people, however, looked sick at the thought. We still had lots of food, donated by supporters, but everyone immediately stopped drinking and eating. It got tense. People grew quiet.

As the negotiations continued in the next room, little by little news came in: they were granting the student government the power to e-mail the entire student body, something they hadn't previously been able to do; a socially-responsible investment committee would be formed; no one who had occupied would be expelled. We were mostly getting what we wanted, except a few things, such as the opening of the university's accounting books, the immediate resignation of Kerrey and Murtha, and, most importantly, the building. There would be no compromise. The building was going down. And we, too, were on the verge of going down. Standing in front of the glass windows, peeking out from behind the butcher paper that read "NEW SCHOOL IN EXILE" and "EDUCATION IS NOT ABOUT PROFIT" at the numerous police officers and large-bellied security guards prohibiting our access to the toilets, we knew that our occupation was over.

The administration did, however, offer to create of an interim study space for students (which became the site of the recent, also brief, New School occupation in November of this year). They also said that a group of students would be allowed to be on the committee that was planning the new building.

So it was that I found myself a few weeks later, drinking bad coffee at nine in the morning next to our new provost, Tim Marshall, alongside architects and administrators—who nervously eyed the other student representatives and me—looking over various blueprints that the venerable architectural

The subsequent denial by Justice Stallman of essentially the same relief granted by Justice Billings earlier in the day, did not render Justice Billings' original order invalid during those morning hours on November 15. At the very least, any and all arrests of persons who tried to reenter the Park after the City was served or made aware of Justice Billings' Order, should be vacated and dismissed.

While Justice Stallman ruled that the First Amendment did not require that the protesters be given a right to bring in tents, sleeping bags or other items which would enable them to remain in the Park overnight, nowhere in Justice Stallman's Order does he authorize the City to put up barricades around the park or search people coming into the park, yet this is what's happening. If someone were to violate Justice Stallman's order and bring sleeping bags or tents into the park, there are legal steps the City can take to address such a violation. Instead, the City has taken an inappropriate short-cut by placing the barricades and searching all who try to enter, once again flaunting proper legal channels—all of this to protect the private property rights of the owners of Zuccotti Park.

These illegal actions by the Mayor, are taken directly out of the playbook of the 1%, serve the 1% and are done in behalf of the 1%. What better service can movement lawyers provide than to carry this message on behalf of the 99% to the halls of the 1%.

Karen Smith is a recently retired New York State Acting Supreme Court Justice. Justice Smith is not serving on the legal team representing OWS before Justice Stallman. This article is offered only for discussion purposes and not to second guess or criticize any of the legal work which has so valiantly been done to date.

firm SOM had prepared for the "University Center" that would replace the building we had occupied. I blinked at the designs, which I knew would be realized long after I'd left the New School, and felt the gloom of compromise. I offered the suggestion that a rooftop garden might make the building more sustainable, and its residents could eat from it, too; I received weird, patronizing looks in response. A rooftop garden was not entered into the SOM design.

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On October 5, 2011, when Occupy Wall Street called for a Day of Action for students and unions, the entire New School faculty signed their name to an online pledge in support of OWS. They all walked out of the university and marched, alongside thousands of students from The New School and NYU, down to Zuccotti Park (or, to Foley Square, where the police boxed them in and let them trickle out little-by-little). Atop the ledge surrounding Zuccotti Park on its north side, as the march went by, people were holding an enormous banner that read, "ARAB SPRING, EUROPEAN SUMMER, AMERICAN FALL." In the bottom corner, it said, "NEW SCHOOL IN EXILE." It had been resurrected.

Our December 2008 occupation received letters of support from Greek labor unions, from the Chicago factory workers who were striking, and from students everywhere, particularly UC Berkeley, where students were gearing up for their own occupation in protest against a 33 percent tuition hike. We received emails from people like Clemson University philosophy professor and anarchist Todd May, who wrote: "Too often, in our world, we are told that politics is dead, that resistance is useless, and that public action is nothing more than an exercise in nostalgia. We are told that we live in a post-political world, where we must compromise with those who would oppress us and must subordinate ourselves to those who would manage our lives for us. These past few days you have shown, as others in Europe, in Latin America, in Asia and Africa seek to show, that politics is not dead, that resistance is

SARAH RESNICK

November 15, Courtroom

The Protesters have had two months to occupy the park with tents and sleeping bags. Now they will have to occupy the space with the power of their arguments.

—Bloomberg

Last night, police descended on Liberty Square with an all-out assault on the senses, employing tear gas and pepper spray, blinding lights and sound cannons and rubber batons. With brutal force they arrested nearly two hundred protesters, trashing the protesters' personal belongings and items collectively owned by OWS. These included tents, clothing, computers, cameras, and the more than five thousand books that formed the People's Library. Some of these items were carted off to a Department of Sanitation garage on 57th St. where they were later available for pick-up.

All this in the name of "public health and safety."

Of course the eviction was not really a surprise; that it hadn't happened sooner was perhaps more surprising. For their part, the OWS legal working group, in collaboration with a team of lawyers from the National Lawyers Guild, had long been preparing for this moment. The first thing they did was call a judge—in this case, Justice Lucy Billings, who, as the media were quick to point out, had spent a few years working at the ACLU. Despite the late hour, Justice Billings drew up a

Temporary Restraining Order barring the police from evicting protesters who were not breaking any laws, and also from enforcing rules made after the protests started. This meant the police could not prevent protesters from reentering the park with tents and other personal belongings. At around 4:45 AM, the application for the Temporary Restraining Order was faxed to the City and the OWS legal team invited representatives from both Brookfield and Bloomberg's office to discuss the proposed order. They failed to respond. ("It was in the middle of the night!" they would argue later in court. But so too was the eviction attack.) The order was signed by Justice Billings sometime around 6:30 AM. The city was served with this order at 7:50 AM.

A little after 11 AM, I arrived at the park to find it defended by three successive lines of security. At the outermost layer, metal barricades surrounded the perimeter; directly behind them stood a row of police in riot gear; and further back still, toward the center of the park, an unfamiliar genre of yellow-vested officers were spread out like pieces on a checkerboard. On Twitter a joke was circulating: The police are occupying the park! But it was also not a joke. The NYPD were in contempt of a judge's order and there was seemingly no recourse. Who do you call when the police disobey the courts? Since, after all, it is they who ostensibly enforce the law.

Outside the barricades, protesters and onlookers convened, and many were quick to taunt the police: "What are your demands? When will you provide them to us?!" Others held up printed copies of the TRO (which had circulated online earlier that morning), and shouted accusations of breach and legal disregard, accusations to which the police seemed mostly impervious. Those few brave enough to test the order's legitimacy, usually by jumping the barricades, found themselves restrained in zip-ties and hauled off to jail. Later I would read that the City acknowledged having received the order, but claimed they were "seeking clarification" prior to implementation. Whatever that means.

Being temporary, as it was, there was a time limit on the TRO, which asked that a "show cause" hearing take place by 11:30 AM the same morning. And so a hearing was scheduled. Were the City to demonstrate that it had legal grounds to evict the protesters, the order would be nullified, and the eviction upheld. The City selected a different judge to hear the case, reportedly via randomized computer software. He was Justice Michael Stallman. As a friend later explained to me, this didn't

bode well for the protesters: As a judge in the City Court system, Stallman had found in favor of the City time and time again. During the hearing, he revealed that he is a resident of the financial district and had for a long time served on Community Board One.

I thought about going home to rest. I also thought about going to my office; I did have work to do. But instead I went to the courtroom. I'm not sure why. Partially I was confused, and wanted to understand: How could a restraining order be brought against the police? I thought the police enforced restraining orders. And then I had big-picture questions, too, questions that troubled me a bit. By seeking an injunction, would OWS be accused (and possibly guilty) of political incoherence? From its inception, the movement had refused to issue demands. This decision may have been partially tactical, but for many it was theoretically and politically rooted: Making demands legitimizes the state and why legitimize a system you wish to replace? And yet here, in the act of seeking an injunction, OWS had turned to the state for help. It seemed worth thinking about this incongruence. Maybe you use the state when you can: its a tactical decision, a strategic maneuver to further the movement at the cost of momentary political disjointedness. But who was bringing this suit to the courts? And who had made the decision to do so on behalf of the movement?

That afternoon the courtroom was crowded. I recognized a few people I'd seen around the park or at meetings or actions, but most were unfamiliar. Before the hearing, those of us without official press credentials lined up outside the courtroom and waited. We weren't sure whether we'd be allowed in at all, but we stood patiently all the same. In front of me, a few people squabbled over the use of an electrical outfit. Everyone needed to charge something or other and one woman in particular seemed unwilling to share. More than one insult was launched her way. I don't remember how long I waited in that line, but I know I was one of the last three people allowed in the courtroom. I sat in the very last row and looked at my fellow observers. We were tired, ragged. Many of us had been up all night, or most of the night anyway. And as we waited for the proceeding to begin, several heads around me nodded, lulled to sleep by the first moment of inactivity, an excuse finally to sit in repose. We were told we would not be permitted to use electronic devices; those who did would be asked to leave. I heard whispering

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not useless, and that public action is precisely what our world requires and demands."

The letter made us proud to be students of the New School, and confirmed our belief that we were not merely complaining about our particular, isolated situation—we were participating in a broader critique of neoliberalism, of which our corporatized university was just one instance.

But, for the most part, The New School in Exile did not have the support of our own faculty and fellow students. Only two faculty members, Tim Pachirat and Simon Critchley, publicly announced their support of the occupation and visited it. In my department, people accused me of participating in an "elitist" and "exclusionary" movement—too secretive for all to have been involved, too time-demanding for students with jobs to participate. Our department chair, Hugh Raffles, read a statement to us expressing his belief that direct action was not the way to go in this situation. Students nodded in agreement. The New School in Exile had also, during the occupation, been associated with some fairly questionable acts: a group of students literally

about the judge. Was anyone familiar with his career history? Apparently not. I had left anything resembling paper at home and pulled out a brown paper bag—remnants from breakfast—on which to take notes. The girl next to me pulled out a spiral-bound notebook and tore off a few sheets for me. They were tiny, but they would do. It was now nearly 1PM.

Soon thereafter Judge Stallman, a slight man with a soft white beard and almost goofy grin, entered the courtroom and arguments began. OWS was represented by nine counsel from the National Lawyer's Guild. The petitioner was a woman named Jennifer Waller. There were others, too, but they were unnamed. Additionally, counsel representing the Transit Workers' Union and Working Family Party made an application to participate in the oral arguments—they were intervening on behalf of themselves and in support of the protesters. So first there was a question of standing: Could a union and political party legitimately petition on behalf of the movement? (I couldn't help but think that at least some people in the movement felt the same way.) The NLG lawyers argued they could—members of both groups had been actively involved in OWS even if they didn't sleep in the park. In the end, they were met with no opposition from the City, and their arguments were heard.

At issue was whether the eviction of Liberty Square impinged on the protesters' First Amendment protections. The lawyer who spoke most eloquently on behalf of OWS was Alan Levine. I only ever saw the back of his head. He had a full head of white hair and wore a suit. I think it was olive green, it might have been gray. Brookfield was trying to make this into a camping case, he argued. But it is one of free speech. This was not the first time that First Amendment rights and camping were linked and other cases were cited. For instance, *Clark v. Community for Creative Non-Violence*. In 1984, CCNV argued that National Park Service regulations which prohibited camping in conjunction with a proposed demonstration were unconstitutional. The court disagreed. But, according to Levine, this case was different: The demonstration had captured the world's attention due to its round-the-clock nature. He noted:

chased Bob Kerrey down the street in the West Village, near his home, screaming at him as he ran. Kerrey, a Vietnam War veteran, had had part of his leg taken off by a grenade in the Nha Trang Bay. When we inside the occupation heard this had happened, some people cheered, and our blogger, Scott, condoned it in a blog post titled "See Bob Run." Others wondered if it was ever really okay to chase and threaten a late-middle-aged, hobbling man.

What was it three years later that suddenly made it okay to Occupy? Was it the occupation itself—more dramatic, more clearly connected to the broad impact of the economic crisis beyond the context of our private university? Was it that people had become angrier about the inability of Congress to deal with the recession? Was it that radical politics finally seemed justified in a situation where no other form of politics was effective? Perhaps, if we want to be self-congratulatory, our New School in Exile movement shook things up a bit and created the space for that radicalism. Or maybe it just has to do with the simple fact that, thanks to the convenient location of a 24-hour McDonald's down the street on Broadway, the occupiers of Zuccotti Park had the one crucial element that our movement never possessed: a bathroom. Having finished my master's, I'm no longer at The New School, so I don't know what prompted my faculty to support this occupation, when the previous one had seemed out of bounds. Maybe it's just easier to accept criticism when it isn't in your own backyard.

“The power of the symbolic speech resides in the fact that it is a twenty-four-hour occupation.... It is an essential part of their speech that they are able to protect themselves from the weather.” And as symbolic speech the use of tents is therefore also fully protected by the First Amendment.

Discussion turned to whether the park itself could be considered a public forum. As has been well documented, Zuccotti Park is a special case of privately owned public space—an amenity in exchange for development rights. The City argued that as this space has not been traditionally used for public activity (it has no history of demonstrations), First Amendment rights are limited there. The park's status as public forum would also bear on what kind of rules could be implemented by the park owners, and when. In this case, there had been no particular rules at Zuccotti prior to the start of the occupation; some weeks in, a sign went up prohibiting camping.

Judge Stallman asked whether the absence of pre-existing rules should prevent Brookfield from establishing them now. Alan Levine argued that the very presence of the occupation claimed the space as protected by the First Amendment at the time the rules were established. “They created rules after the fact in order to limit activity. Those rules were made six weeks ago. This is a profound response to speech activity.” If the park owners wanted to implement rules, they should impinge on speech as minimally as possible. If the concerns were really over fire hazards (the presence of fuel-based generators and cigarette butts; also, the tents were blocking park exits) and sanitation (human waste, mostly; trash too), were there no other means to address them? Why were the protesters not afforded the opportunity to address these grievances? For one, they had already shown a good faith effort to deal with these issues responsibly: They had new restroom facilities (a nearby ground-floor space with rented Port-a-Pottys) and a new bike-powered generator to replace the fuel-based one. There was no particular emergency that morning, the NLG lawyers argued. The protesters had done nothing to provoke the police to enter en

masse, in the middle of the night, and with such violent means.

Throughout the hearing, Brookfield's legal counsel, Douglas H. Flaum, remarked again and again: We would like to enforce our rules, but we will not prevent protesters from asserting their First Amendment rights. They can continue using the space twenty-four hours a day. We will not impinge on their right to speech. We want for nothing but that the space be used as intended—a space open and accessible to all. And we ask merely that the protesters follow the rules, as stated:

NO

Camping and/or the erection of tents or other structures.

Lying down on the ground, or lying down on benches...

Placement of tarps or sleeping bags or other covering on the property

Storage or placement of personal property on the ground, benches, sitting areas or other walkways which unreasonably interferes with the use of such areas by others.

The proceeding adjourned and the judge left to deliberate. I left thinking that the judge's line of questioning had seemed fair and lucid. But I had no sense which way he'd vote.

Later that afternoon, the OWS text alert system sent out a message announcing victory: The judge had decided in favor of the protesters, and the restraining order against the City and the NYPD would be

upheld! Hooray! This turned out to be false. What Justice Stallman did say—and the double negative is confusing—was that OWS legal counsel “did not demonstrate that the rules adopted by Brookfield Properties are not reasonable time, place and manner restrictions permitted under the First Amendment.” The ruling was made under the assumption that the park was in fact a public forum and thus that upholding the First Amendment must be considered. And so: that was that. No more tents or sleeping bags. No more sleeping at the park. No more twenty-four-hour occupation.

The judge also affirmed that the “owner of Zuccotti Park has represented that, after cleaning and restoration of Zuccotti Park, it will permit the Occupy Wall Street demonstrators to reenter the park and resume using it again in conformity with the law and with the owners' rules.” And yet since the time of the ruling, park use has been continuously limited. Twenty-four hours a day, the park is surrounded by police and private security guards. Barricades limit entry except in designated locations and park users may be subject to random bag inspection with no cause or warrant. Police instruct protesters not to sit on concrete partitions. Protesters carrying books, food, musical instruments, and extra warm clothing have all been denied access to the park. Brookfield and the City have failed to live up to their word in court. And it seems now we now who the police serve and protect.

Rebecca Nathanson

STUDENT POWER

It was a chant I'd heard many times over the previous four weeks, a simple call-and-response to which I'd become quickly accustomed. I'd rehearsed my impassioned answer in general assemblies, at rallies, and on marches, and the rhythm of my steps and clapping hands synched perfectly with the timing of my words. At every event people would scream, “Show me what democracy looks like!” and at every event I'd screamed back, “This is what democracy looks like!” The only difference was that this time, on a warm Saturday afternoon in Washington Square Park, I was on the other side of the conversation, offering the prompt rather than the response.

It was October 15, and Occupy Wall Street had not yet reached its one-month anniversary. Moments after my chant, NYPD officers would arrest twenty-four people—many of whom were students—in the middle of an action at a Citibank down the street. Hours later, thousands would fill Times Square, chanting, “The whole world is watching,” and looking up at their own faces on the JumboTron. But it is that moment, standing on top of a bench that I pass everyday on the way to class and leading a familiar chant for the first time, that sticks out in my memory two months later.

That afternoon, as people in cities around the world protested together in recognition of an international day of action, New York City students held their first assembly in Washington Square Park. Students from Columbia, CUNY, New School, and NYU talked about the organizing taking place on their own campuses and we broke out into working groups and exchanged emails. It felt much like the beginning of Occupy Wall Street had: full of unknown potential and, for a lot of us, completely unfamiliar.

A week and a half earlier, students from schools across the city had walked out of class and marched to Foley Square in support of OWS and the labor unions. Nobody had known what to expect when the call went

EVICTION ACTION, EAST NY

Erin Sheehy
NEIGHBORS

I was on my way to the Occupy our Homes event in East New York when someone started a human mic on the subway platform at Broadway Junction, announcing to everyone else awaiting the next L train what the occupiers would be doing that day: marching through the neighborhood, stopping at foreclosed homes – East New York has the highest foreclosure rate in Brooklyn, about 16 out of every 1000 homes

– and throwing a housewarming party for a homeless family that was moving into a house that had stood vacant ever since Bank of America took over the property three years ago. I joined in the human mic, repeating the organizer's words, but I didn't raise my voice or look people in the eye the way I'd done at so many marches and protests before. In and around Zuccotti Park, chants and human mics directed towards non-participants always felt more like a display than anything else; I'm not sure I ever meant it when I yelled, "Join us!" to passersby, mostly because I didn't think they would. The point, at times – like when we chanted while blocking the NYSE on November 17th – had been to

out for the walkout; students as a group unto themselves had not yet begun to organize across schools. Student activists had been a presence in some universities for a long time: The New School had had previous occupations, various activist groups had already existed at NYU, and CUNY students had already been organizing for a walkout. But those groups had been isolated on those individual campuses—and lying dormant on many others, especially at smaller schools such as Juilliard, Pratt, and some of the CUNY campuses.

Those early days were about coming together around our support for the movement and finding common ground with people from different schools and backgrounds. Now, two months later, we have experienced much of what the rest of the movement has gone through: organization and reorganization, success and disappointment, peaceful demonstration, and police violence. We know each other's names and schools. We know who to talk to about what issues. We know how to organize marches and deliver inspirational speeches.

Because of OWS, many of the student activists on larger, more dispersed campuses have found one another and formed organizations or general assemblies. We now have the infrastructure necessary to make our presence—and our anger—known to the greater community, and we have a network of allies at schools across the city who are willing to lend support. The question is which route to take: Do we focus on actions at individual schools, on cross-university issues, or on our connection to the larger Occupy movement? We've had experience with all three options, and there is debate about which one is the best use of our time and resources.

There were weeks when only ten people came to the all-city student assembly and I found myself questioning the purpose of that organizing structure. But there were weeks when our assembly drew a large crowd, when Florida natives spending the semester in New York came to participate, when students from Pennsylvania and Connecticut drove in just to learn more about our organizing practice and brainstorm tactics to use at their own schools. At those times, when we were able to connect with students from other areas and coordinate ideas, the purpose of the all-city student assembly was clear.

There were instances when individual schools were facing problems and the connections that had been made through the assembly paid off in the form of cross-university solidarity. On November 21, when the CUNY Board of Trustees met at Baruch College to hold an open-forum about upcoming

disrupt people's day. But now we were crowding a subway station, imploring people to come along on a march through their own neighborhood. It was the first time, at an OWS event, that I'd really been worried about annoying people; we needed them to like us. Turning attention toward foreclosures and keeping people in their homes – or placing them in empty ones – seemed like the right direction for Occupy Wall Street to take. But I feared that without community support it would feel like the wrong kind of occupation – less a model for a better world than an invasion.

"Whose block? Our block!" we chanted as we marched towards the first abandoned home. But it wasn't our block – I overheard a woman saying this was the first time she'd been to East New York – and something about a group of mostly white people taking a "foreclosure tour" through a predominantly black neighborhood rubbed me the wrong way. However, as more and more onlookers voiced their support – "I commend you, I commend you, I commend you," an auto mechanic repeated, looking each of us in the eye as we passed – my worry faded away.

When we arrived at our final destination, we found out that the family was already inside their new home. Despite the cold and the rain, it really did feel like a block party: huge bunches of multicolored balloons tied to the front gate, a Christmas tree – complete with lights – in the yard, a band playing in the street. "FORECLOSE ON BANKS NOT PEOPLE," read the bright yellow poster above the front door. A cleaning crew in dust masks filed towards the house, and people carrying furniture, houseplants, and presents huddled around the gate. I began to wonder if the family would come out at all; considering the legal ramifications of what we were doing, I thought perhaps they would prefer to

stay anonymous and out of sight. But finally they emerged, to an eruption of cheers. Alfredo Carrasquillo, the father of the family, addressed the crowd. His speech wasn't a rallying cry, nor was it a tale of woe, but there was something about it that was incredibly touching. Perhaps it was just the moment – in a city where waves of gentrification continue to sweep poverty into more distant corners or more concentrated pockets, here was someone insisting that he be seen, and that his neighborhood be seen, too. Later, volunteers unfurled another banner from the roof: BANKS STEAL HOMES. Above the words was a skyline in silhouette, the outline of a city. Roofs and walls were traced in blue paint, the actual houses nothing but blank spaces on white fabric – left, in other words, to our own imaginations.

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Although the day had seemed like a success, I couldn't help feeling regretful when I came home, passing the four abandoned houses on my block in Bedford-Stuyvesant. For a year and a half, my next-door neighbor was a squatter who entered his home through a makeshift plywood door; the rest of the doors and windows had been mortared over. I'd been wary of him initially, thinking you couldn't fully trust someone who lived their life by breaking and entering, but over time we developed a rapport. I gave him blankets and furniture, and food for the cat that followed him at his heels. We didn't chat much – I was always worried that the neighbors would disapprove of my helping him out. I was out of town when he was forced to leave the premises this past August, his belongings dumped into a pile in the front yard, but sometimes I worry that even if I'd been there I wouldn't have known what to do, or done it if I did. The house is sitting empty now. I always

tuition hikes, members of the all-city student assembly were there, standing with their CUNY peers to protest the increasing cost of public education. As a student at NYU, I had never had any contact with CUNY students until the October 15 assembly, but I was at Baruch that night. I stood with my nose pressed to the glass windows of the building, watching as NYPD officers beat and arrested my fellow students for staging a peaceful sit-in. And when the Board met again a week later, I returned, this time to find a noticeably larger crowd composed of students from an even more diverse collection of schools.

The events at CUNY brought the movement into our schools in a very real way. It is one thing to occupy a park or to illegally take the streets during a march; we expect police repression in those cases. But it is another thing to meet that type of repression in school, in a place in which you have a right to not only be, but also to have your voice heard.

Those protests took place just about a week after the November 17 Day of Action, on which thousands of students had rallied in an over-capacity Union Square. That rally demonstrated the power of the student movement and helped bridge the gap between students from public and private universities. Together we listened to stories of personal experiences with student debt and high youth unemployment rates, and together we took the streets all the way down to Foley Square. It was on the heels of that inspiring day that students from different universities protested together at Baruch College.

But now that we have the connections and the organizational structure, we need to figure out what to do with them. Occupy Wall Street is responsible for creating many different groups and general assemblies, and the student assembly is one of them. Before September 17, there was no student movement, but our connections to Zuccotti Park have lessened since it first brought us together.

wondered who owned it; I've resolved to find out.

It's easy to absolve yourself from guilt when you're talking about national economic policy and the 99%, but when it comes to enacting change in your own neighborhood, it's not always so clear-cut. Perhaps this is especially true in New York: according to the US Census Bureau, 69% of the households in New York City are inhabited by renters, more than any other major US city. In a town full of renters, the fight for affordable housing is not just about homeowners and banks; we are often fighting amongst ourselves.

For decades now, the subtext of our neighborhood battles has been the seemingly unstoppable process of gentrification and displacement. Whether you're riding the wave of gentrification or it's sweeping you away – or you've been left bobbing in its wake – the sense that the city is on a set path can lead you to a feeling of helplessness. "Where else am I going to go?" I've heard many a young gentrifier say, refusing to be held accountable for what seems like a basic inevitability. But to cede everything to the wave doesn't do you – or anyone else – much good, because when you give up responsibility, you also give up agency. I've often wandered through New York City with a mix of nostalgia and bitter resignation, fantasizing about a city that used to be, worrying about the city that's yet to come. But now, I see possibility. Whose city? Not "our" city, entirely. But not someone else's either.

OCCUPY REAL ESTATE MARCH, EAST NEW YORK, PHOTO BY BRENNAN CAVANAUGH



Our autonomy can be a strength. Without our ability to organize events and see them through to fruition, none of what we have done so far would have been possible. And yet, we cannot forget our origin. At key moments in the movement's history, students have mobilized not as an autonomous group, but simply as members of OWS. On days of action, at labor rallies, when Zuccotti Park was evicted in the middle of the night, when Sotheby's workers picketed on auction nights, when a family re-occupied a foreclosed home in Brooklyn, students came out in large numbers and lent their energy, as well as their vocal chords, to struggles that were greater than just one group of people.

Students have a place in this movement, but where that place is remains unclear. This movement moves so quickly that I often find myself thinking that it has been going on for years, rather than months. But we are still in the early stages, and we are still figuring out how best to use our particular role as students while also contributing to the movement as a whole. At NYU, a lot of the work that we are doing is still outreach—talking to students about why their individual problems are part of a larger issue and opening them up to the possibility of real, tangible change.

At our universities, we are faced with rising tuition, union busting, and a complete lack of transparency or fiscal accountability. Many students will graduate with massive amounts of student loan debt, and most will be faced with unemployment or underemployment before they are even handed a diploma and told to throw their mortarboard hats into the air. These are issues that face students at every school, public or private, but they are also issues that emphasize one of the messages of the larger movement: We're suffering the consequences of problems that we did not cause.

MEAGHAN LINICK

Occupying A Foreclosed Home

December 6th was a national day to "Occupy Our Homes"—a day to take over foreclosed and abandoned homes all over the country and call public attention to the housing crisis. In NYC OWS partnered with community groups to organize a march that culminated in the occupation of a foreclosed house in East New York, a community hard hit by predatory lending and full of vacant bank owned properties. Plans were made for a house to be occupied and fixed up for a family to move into while protesters staged a large welcoming party on the street outside. I joined the affinity group that would be sleeping at the house on a rotating basis with the family to deter eviction.

The house had three rooms on the bottom floor and two on the top as well as a basement and a little roof area that you could go out to on the back of the second floor. Other than some water damage and mold, which an expert told us was safe, the house was in pretty good shape. There was no running water, but the toilets worked and could be bucket flushed. We used a generator for electricity. A member of OWS Sanitation taught me and another woman how to refuel the generator. I felt very proud of myself, jumping over the roof wall in the freezing rain in my dress to pump gas into a generator throughout the night and the next morning. OWS Sanitation did an excellent job cleaning up the house and setting up systems for power and water.

Our affinity group met with several other people that had been appointed from their working groups (medical, security, Livestream, etc.) to support this action. There were about twenty of us in the meeting and we discussed who would be staying that night, the process for how we would determine who would be staying there other nights, whether or not we wanted medical and security (yes) and how many (two of each), and what was our plan if the police tried to evict us. We decided that if the police came to arrest us, we would gather in the downstairs front room and sing a song about housing and take arrests together, with some soft blocks and barricades potentially involved. That first night was inspiring. Pizzas were delivered, ordered by sympathizers from all over the world. We sang songs, including our anthem, "Home of Our Own."

People gave interviews, had political conversations, played games, and enjoyed the high-spirited mood. That night I slept on an old mattress with a friend in a room with three other people who slept on floor mats.

The next morning I had to leave around 10 AM to go to work (I work as a babysitter as well as coat check in a restaurant). I arrived back on site at around 9pm. A lot had changed in the house the 11 hours I was away. The two back rooms on the downstairs were completely blocked off because the dry wall had all been torn out. The construction team was planning on installing new walls sometime later in the week. Logistically, this meant a lot less sleeping space. Also, the previous owner of the house had shown up around 3pm. He had abandoned the house three years ago and has been in an ongoing foreclosure process with Bank of American. He never lived at the property but had rented it out. The NYPD had tracked him down at his mother's house to get the go ahead to throw us all out. Confused and spooked, he had come to see what was going on. He spoke with two members of our group who assured him that we had his interests in mind and pleaded with him not to involve the cops (who repeatedly called his cell phone during this conversation). He ended up leaving abruptly, as the whole situation was making him nervous.

He ended up having two follow up phone conversations with one of our affinity group members. In the first conversation he said he was hopeful we could work something out and did not want to involve the cops. In the second conversation he said he spoke to a lawyer who told him not to trust us and that we didn't have his interests in mind. He agreed to have a meeting with several of us the next day. We were all afraid that he might give into the cops' manipulation or that the police would simply arrest us anyway.

This development created an incredibly tense and stressful mood inside the house. Soon we were meeting to discuss the situation and our plans for dealing with

the cops. Some people were nervous that this complication changed the story from us vs. bank to us vs. some guy and that maybe we shouldn't get arrested for this particular house anymore. Others, myself included argued that any house would have a complicated history and that this development didn't significantly change our situation and we should continue with the original plan. Alfredo, the father of the family that had moved in, said that while he heard people's concerns and wasn't going to tell anyone what to do, his family had put too much on the line to give up now. The group regained their resolve despite the new complications. The meeting continued, everyone tense knowing we could get arrested at any moment. Seconds after headed upstairs to get my cellphone I heard:

"Police approaching the door!"

"Alright—everyone stay calm, stay where you are. One person talk to them." The police officer told the person guarding the door that we were illegally trespassing and were facing arrest if we stayed. We immediately jumped into action. Alfredo went outside to speak with the officers (just two cars at the moment). People began calling the National Lawyers Guild and taking down names and birthdays. The Livestream team started reporting. We locked our tools in someone's van, worried that they would be confiscated and put us out \$3,000. I topped off the fuel in our generator so the power wouldn't cut off at an important moment. And, of course, everyone was lighting up cigarettes. Most of us gathered in the front room where the Livestream was shooting and began singing our anthem: We need a home, a home of our own / We gonna take back something we own / We need a home, a home of our own / Bankers keep taking our homes, and we won't let 'em go

The mood inside was intense, but inspiring and hopeful. All of us were willing to be arrested at any moment for the home, the family, and the movement—it was a powerful feeling.

Around 1:30 AM someone announced that Council Member Charles Barron had been contacted. He was making phone calls to the NYPD and ready to come down here to make sure the situation did not escalate, which prompted the NYPD to agree to not to make any arrests that night. Of course we were all nervous that the NYPD would change their position, but we certainly felt safer hearing this news. We had a meeting figure out how to deal with dozen or so people who had shown up at the house to provide back up since we were running out of room. Finally we went to bed, packed tighter than before. I slept on the floor in an upstairs room packed like sardines with four others. The night had been stressful, but our determination and resolve had been strengthened. Four nights later and the house is still being held.

When I stood on that bench in Washington Square Park on October 15, just learning how to lead a chant, I had no idea that the student movement would become what it has become. This is the first time in my lifetime that a social movement has been so resonant; what once existed only in textbooks now exists in my own life. In the coming weeks, as we begin to address the question of what direction to take, differing opinions are bound to arise, and I expect a lot will change within the all-city student assembly. Where we go next is important; but it is equally important to make sure that our ties to the larger Occupy movement remain in tact along the way.

OCCUPATION DISPATCHES

RANDALL COHN

OCCUPY MN

On the unseasonably warm afternoon of October 15, several hundred people capped a noisy march through downtown Minneapolis by parading to the grassy South plaza at the Hennepin County Government Center, and forming a circle around a dozen hastily assembled tent-like structures constructed of thin plastic sheeting stretched over 2x2 frames. Word had gotten out to the Sheriff's office – at that point, perhaps directly communicated by the controversial police liaison – that we were planning to pitch tents at 5pm, in defiance of a strict order that structures of any kind would not be tolerated. Half a dozen sheriff's deputies were standing with arms crossed, flanked by two or three members of the county building's security force, presumably prepared to step in and prevent the tents from going up in the first place. The improvisational genius of the pre-made tents allowed the group to march onto the lawn already in formation around the tents and to immediately direct its full force towards their defense.

For the next several hours, we held a rally around the tents in which bullhorns were passed among those who had chosen arrestable action as well as those who stood in the crowded outer perimeter. Extemporaneous speakers included veterans, foreclosure victims, a union steward, a novice catholic priest, medical and social service providers, and a theology

professor. Several people who had argued against the tent action at the previous two nights' general assemblies brought food and water to those in the inner circle, sat in temporarily to provide room for a quick run to the port-a-potty, and ran messages. Gradually, several dozen real tents rose up in the center, and the circle pushed out to accommodate them. Participants dutifully called and texted and tweeted and updated their Facebook pages, and the crowd grew steadily as the evening turned to night. Someone announced that our Livestream feed had been picked up by the OWS and Global Revolution channels, and a huge cheer rose up. That morning we had all paid close attention as the massive show of force at Zuccotti Park had made Bloomberg flinch – and now it was our turn, and New York was watching us. At 9pm I called my wife to tell her that the Sheriff's office had given us a five minute warning, and that I would very likely be spending the rest of the night in jail. By 1 AM, it had started to drizzle, most supporters had gone home, and I crawled into my tent thinking we would make it through the night. By 2:30, the personal tents had been confiscated, the makeshift ones destroyed, and – with nobody arrested – a group of 50 or so had convened an emergency meeting to discuss our next steps. Exhausted but energized, we consented that we should take another stand as soon as possible, maybe even the next night, and then most of us went home to sleep in our beds.

That moment was, in my view, an early high point for OccupyMN, and marked an important crossroads for its further development. For better or for worse, we didn't

take another stand about the tents until November 29, when a much smaller group made a noble effort to defend a group of tents set up on the pavement of the North plaza. The images on Livestream and Facebook were picturesque – snow falling gently on an encampment covered with signs boasting the diversity of the occupation's constituency – but when the deputies were done carting away the tents in the early hours of the following morning, it effectively marked the end of the physical occupation as such. In the intervening weeks, OccupyMN accomplished a great deal, leading the nation in what has become an essential shift for many cities, away from centralized camps on public property and towards scattered occupations in defense of foreclosed homes. We also struggled during that time to come to grips with the limitations of the General Assembly and the other de facto organizing conventions that had gotten us through the first month or so.

Like many of the occupations that appeared in the weeks after OWS set up camp in lower Manhattan, we reflexively reproduced much of what we had seen in New York, quickly establishing a GA, working groups for food, sanitation and teach-ins, etc., a library full of leftovers from political economy and feminism courses at UMN, and a Livestream

channel. Almost from the beginning, however, the Minneapolis occupation took on a different character from OWS, insofar as the nightly GA and most of the essential working groups that reported to it were largely made up of people who were not – or were only very rarely – actually sleeping on the plaza. This, in turn, was at least partially a result of negotiations between the county and the group of organizers who had chosen the site. That agreement, which allowed the occupation use of city power and a permit to place port-potties on the premises, seemed specifically aimed at restricting the possibility of a long-term settlement, largely by laying out a strict stipulation against tents. It also established a line of regular communication between those organizers and representatives from the county, including the commissioners' council and the sheriff's office.

By the third night's GA, strong lines were drawn between those who wanted to honor the original agreement, and those who did not recognize the authority of the organizers to enter into an agreement and believed that the occupation needed to have a real camp in order to function meaningfully. The question of whether, and how, we should fight for the right to pitch tents became grounds on which a motley crew of activists with a broad

account I heard in his class the year before and I don't think he used the word privatization this time either. Instead the conversation turns to Berkeley's being shielded from the fiscally (and morally) sinking state of California. Another student asks how we, as future applicants on the job market, might be affected. My head throbs. Since before I went back to school I've been reading about the diminishing value of a PhD, the cramped and competitive market for humanities scholars, the high attrition rate of ABDs. I am in debt from my undergraduate years (oh, but I am also indebted to my undergraduate years): the job market is exactly what I don't want to think about. So I tell myself her question is too self-interested to be "in solidarity."

Recently, I have begun to wonder if solidarity could be just this plain kind of speaking: I wonder if it is as simple as an exchange of interests. Of course, it is not so simple—most of us will not stake our real interests by stating them so baldly.

Later that night I listen to my voicemail on my way to BART: A friend has called to see if I'm all right. He says he heard things had gotten out of hand. It's then that I notice the helicopters that have been hovering over campus all day are still there.

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We are on the phone again. I am trying to explain how I avoid festivals and outdoor concerts, that I sometimes feel congenitally unable to join. She was hit with a baton. I'll watch the YouTube videos half—a dozen times before I make her out in the line of protesters. I recognize other people right away, mostly people who are particularly active in the grad-student union. A local news blog says a professor of mine has been arrested, so I watch all the videos again. It is both easy and hard to tell what is happening. When the police write an open letter, they'll say the videos do not show other things, like just how provocative the crowd was. Our chancellor's first letter will regret the protesters had chosen to be "not non-violent."

When I send her a text that night to make sure she's OK, I've started watching a Livestream of the ongoing stand-off on Sproul Plaza. The guy with the camera keeps saying "Sproul" and I think he must be an outside enthusiast. I wonder if I am an outside enthusiast. I send the YouTube links to my family.

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KATHRYN CRIM

Bulldozers of the Mind

We are the phone, a friend and I. I ask her what it might be like to write from the periphery. She wonders, What is the event?

A preliminary description requires I give you a time and a place. On the afternoon of November 9, I was in a seminar. We'd convened in the courtyard of the Berkeley Art Museum, not in our usual room in the French Department. This was supposed to be a gesture of solidarity, a disruption (not an interruption—we are all trying very hard not be interrupted) of the usual weekly pattern to recognize the problems facing the University of California, express disagreement with the administration, acknowledge urgency, make teaching visible. This is the language we use when we talk about a "gesture that speaks": recognizing, expressing, acknowledging, making visible. These words recruit us before we even find the direct object of our dismay. Action gets forestalled in the gerundive, but we are already out the door.

In the late afternoon, the courtyard is a patchwork of sun squares. The café tucked next to the museum entrance faces south to the city and attracts many people unaffiliated with the university. It occurs to me, we have very well removed ourselves to the edge of campus. One student, who has apparently attended the noon rally, is wearing a bright green sign like a cape. The professor gives a short talk on the UC budget. It is more or less the same

range of political and cultural commitments began to work through the often painful process of coalition building. At the same time, we were still struggling with the basic mechanics of the GA process, arguing nightly about racial and gender dynamics, which hand signals to use, and how to conceptualize consensus. Nonetheless, the tent action of October 15 was decided upon at the GA two days before, less than a week after the occupation began, by a large group that, buoyed by mild temperatures during the meetings, was able to reach a compromise. It was the OccupyMN General Assembly operating at its best, improvising a process that allowed us to come to a practical decision about an immediate concern. It was also the last time that the GA ever met in that spirit.

The following night, with no tents up and most of the participants from the previous day's action sitting the meeting out, the GA passed on the chance to affirm a coordinated act of defiance regarding the tents, and with the weather finally getting blustery, started to look like the GAs that have happened almost every night since then. Those assemblies, which soon began to meet awkwardly in the 'public' skyways that connect the commercial and financial buildings of downtown Minneapolis and make foot traffic possible during the long winter, were usually characterized by a tension between two kinds of meetings that were trying to happen simultaneously. One was the operations and communications meeting among working groups concerned with increasingly contentious details around finance, media, and messaging, largely made up of people who weren't sleeping downtown. The other was the daily logistical meeting among the hard core occupiers who were feeling increasingly alienated and abandoned by the larger group. One solid decision that did emerge from these meetings was the

formation of a 'winter survival strategies' working group out of which grew the committee that has now planned and executed three foreclosure defenses, as well as several other affinity groups that have organized direct action trainings and have begun planning for other ways to maintain and escalate the movement's momentum now that winter has arrived in full force. None of these groups regularly reports to the GA.

What has happened, of course, has been phenomenal, particularly around the foreclosures. In North Minneapolis, mostly-white occupiers defending the home of an African-American woman canvassed the mostly-black neighborhood and all parties reported remarkably positive and open dialogue around race, community organizing, and activism. In South Minneapolis, 200 people showed up to re-open a house that had been taken from an adjunct UMN Anthropology professor and faced down the police, refusing to allow them to approach the house to board it up, and holding the occupation for 24 hours before the door was broken down and the remaining occupiers removed. Most recently, as part of the national Occupy-Our-Homes day of action, we pledged to defend the home of a Vietnam marine veteran who is facing eviction on a home he has lived in since 1968 that is valued at one-fifth of what he still owes on his mortgage, and we received (mostly) positive recognition by national and international mainstream news outlets. Locally based US Bank has shown signs that it is paying attention, issuing increasingly-panicked sounding internal memos and bungling its attempts to spin the story. People – and, importantly, different people than those who were showing up downtown in October – are starting to get used to the idea of defying unjust laws and standing together in one another's defense. Who would

I post several newsfeeds to Facebook. I check the BART schedule back to Berkeley from San Francisco. But I stay in my room.

The cops, still dressed for a riot, are standing on the steps as if to protect the building from seizure and pillage. They are back-lit by the floodlights like actors on a stage; the mass of people at the foot of the stairs seems to be growing. When I shut the computer a little after midnight, I go looking for an essay I've been meaning to reread all fall:

Almost invariably, authority chooses to use force. The extent of its violence depends upon many factors, but scarcely ever upon the scale of the physical threat offered by the demonstrators. This threat is essentially symbolic. But by attacking the demonstration authority ensures that the symbolic event becomes an historical one: an event to be remembered, to be learnt from, to be avenged (John Berger, 1968).

3. Vengeance—and this is not quite the right word this time, but I don't want to forget that knowing-how-to-act continues to require enemies—starts out as a circulation of angry letters, followed by more measured ones, followed by more official ones. I am consumed by this conversation. I leave the house later and later each morning, because I can't seem to turn away from the internet. When I read news articles observing the spread of Occupy Wall Street to college campuses, I am startled by their lacunae: the arrests are even made to sound peaceable. It is not until former laureate Robert Hass, officially a poet, writes an editorial describing his experience being knocked to the ground that I think the *New York Times*—reading public knows, officially, that excessive force was used that afternoon.

Another day of action is planned for the following week—to be called a General Strike, borrowing on the rhetorical force of Oakland's mass action. I go to a planning meeting, but I also write an email to a friend saying I wasn't so sure about the tents. Perhaps occupying campus, as a mode—of address, was missing its mark. I realized later, sitting in another seminar, that the

have thought it would be possible to make those kinds of claims just a few months ago?

Of course, none of the foreclosure actions have been democratically or transparently organized. Their leaders have largely abandoned the GA as part of their decision making process. Instead, they are working with unions and neighborhood organizing groups – groups that have staff and experience and knowledge about how to run a phone bank, build a network of supporters, and actuate that network when it is necessary to deliver a crowd to put the muscle behind a demo. Many occupiers have expressed concern about this reality, and some have been critical of the actions' focus on media spectacle or the ways in which they risk reinforcing a problematic emphasis on single-family home ownership. Very few would argue, however, that the actions have not been a huge success, both by pushing public discourse to think about the second most important site of material exploitation as a site of struggle (occupy your job is coming!), and by simply giving us something to do so that we continue to believe that we, as a movement, exist. Meanwhile, we are working out the details of how to have a sort of constitutional assembly this winter. Maybe it will produce a spokescouncil, or

a refigured GA, or a way of thinking about coalitions among different groups that aren't directly accountable to one another.

Some will no-doubt mourn the passing of the dramatic and infuriating General Assembly as the radical organ of democratic participation, and the utopian-communitarian project of the centralized occupation. It seems to me, however, that as a people who have been out of the habit of organizing for this kind of fight for several generations, the only way we could have gotten here is through the craziness of direct, improvisational democracy – and now we are beginning to make the conceptual adaptations necessary to bring our movement into its adolescence. Now there are all of these people who have lived through and participated in the ecstatic constitutive moment. They are people for whom the challenges of radical democratic participation are no longer only abstractions, and who are now ready to, precisely, participate in figuring out how to become a movement. If that is being reproduced across the country – and how could it not be – then at the end of the Autumn of 2011, I am exhausted but honestly excited, for the first time, about the political possibilities of the moment in which I live.

students and professors who didn't want to talk about the 9th didn't agree with the politics—or rather they considered the violence to be a consequence of political naiveté, a word reserved for idealists and crowds.

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There's a California dream that goes something like this: a kid from a rural county graduates from high school and goes to Merced Community College then transfers to Cal State Fresno. He does really well and after a year or two transfers again, this time to one of the UCs. Maybe Berkeley. He is taught by some of the most prestigious professors in the country. He goes on to get a PhD and be hired by a great private college on the East Coast. I like this dream a lot. It has many iterations; it has many mirrors. It's poster-perfect, and it carries no price tag.

There's another dream for which you can find the film footage: The dream isn't of 1964, when Mario Savio stood on the steps of Sproul and called for bodies and the bodies were there—were already there—and kept coming. The dream isn't of these students who broke open the Free Speech Movement—even though now there is a plaque and a café. These are signposts you forget because you've gotten so accustomed to thinking you know where you are. The dream—the dream that came true—was this one: "What the railroad did for the second half of the last century and the automobile for the first half of this century may be done for the second half of this century by the knowledge industry." Perhaps President Clark Kerr did not know, could not see clearly, that the production, distribution, and consumption of Knowledge would be possible only on student debt and quiet, obfuscated acts of privatizing what we continue to call a public university.

Here's one more: On a warm fall Tuesday, language classes are being held on the steps of Dwinelle Hall. Through Sather Gate, hand-drawn signs are posted here and there on the plaza to announce various workshops and organized conversations. Small circles of people mic-check in the round and begin reciting poetry. A long line of undergraduates forms to receive hand-printed Occupy Cal posters. I stand for a while listening to a discussion run by the American Studies Department. When I look up, a flock of pigeons cast fast-falling shadows on Sproul Hall. I like this dream too, but I go home early—before the plaza fills with thousands of people for an evening General Assembly and the Mario Savio Memorial Address.

4. I want to know if there will come a time when I too can set aside all my not-knowing-how-to-act for the "not non-violent." The pepper-spraying cop, now the cut-and-paste meme of choice, is a false start. In that eight-minute YouTube video, the one from UC Davis which I imagine you have seen by now, the intolerable section is the middle five minutes. The camera weaves in and out among the protesters, the police turn their faces away, holding open a

GWEN SNYDER

Campaign vs. Encampment

When Occupy first began to take hold in Philadelphia, it sent tremors of excitement through the radical labor organizing community I've worked in for several years now. As the director of Philadelphia Jobs with Justice, a coalition of faith groups, unions, student organizations, and community groups fighting for economic justice through direct action, the broad-based participation in and militantly pro-worker approach of the Occupy movement held a special appeal for me. Time and again, movement elders had asked me when I thought my generation would finally say enough was enough and rise up in protest. Now our moment had come, and I was determined to be a part of it.

My organization quickly stepped up our involvement, offering fiscal sponsorship to Occupy Philly, requesting material

support from local unions, and lending as much staff time as we could to the burgeoning occupation. Caught up in the excitement of Occupy organizing, I also found myself in the unusual position of trying to explain to other folks in the larger labor community why I felt so strongly about getting involved in a political process that lacked clear demand. "I guess I support the work you're doing," a friend doing service worker organizing told me, "but I don't see the point. What is Occupy supposed to do?" It was a good point, and I struggled to find a good answer. After all, like my friends, I'd been trained to believe that good organizing means issue campaign work. The more intensely Philadelphia Jobs with Justice became involved with Occupy, the more I believed in what we were doing—and yet I often found myself at a loss trying to explain to other experienced organizers why I felt Occupy was worth the work of mobilizing, the emotional investment of relational organizing, the personal challenges of getting arrested twice.

Interestingly, the younger people most invested in the vision of a militant economic justice movement were often the most suspicious of Occupy. While we

certainly received pushback from more traditional leaders in the labor movement, I also personally experienced a lot of resistance from younger, more radical organizers used to fighting directly in labor struggles on the ground and in workplaces. Occupy simply did not look like what we had been taught that good organizing should look like. There's rightly been a lot of publicity around the challenges Occupy has posed to dominant media narratives. Perhaps more surprisingly, Occupy has also challenged and subverted a narrative internal to the professional organizing community: the necessity of campaign-driven organizing.

Before Occupy, it was generally accepted among most direct action organizers that strong political organization emerges from a trained organizer agitating an existing community into strategically implementing an issue-based campaign with clear, winnable, desired outcomes that advance the long-term goals of the organization. In labor organizing, this might mean a campaign for higher wages or a workplace election for union recognition; in community organizing, it might mean a campaign to force a factory to stop dumping waste into a local river. Tactics exist only to further a campaign; campaigns exist to further the long-term goals of the organization.

When organizer friends questioned the strategic value of Occupy, I initially shared their doubt. One of the great strengths of contemporary organizing culture has been our institutionalization of strategic organizing trainings like Wellstone, Midwest Academy, and others. When you plan a campaign with the Midwest Academy strategy chart, you start with goals (long-term, mid-term, short-term); you assess your resources, allies, and opposition; and you focus on your target (the decision-maker with the power to give you what you want). Each component has clear parameters; each term has a clearly delineated definition. Only once you have laid this strategic groundwork do you begin to plot tactics. The methodology is exact and rooted in the real life experience of movement elders. The vocabulary is sharp and widely-known. Victory is defined clearly, evaluation simple. The model can be stunningly effective.

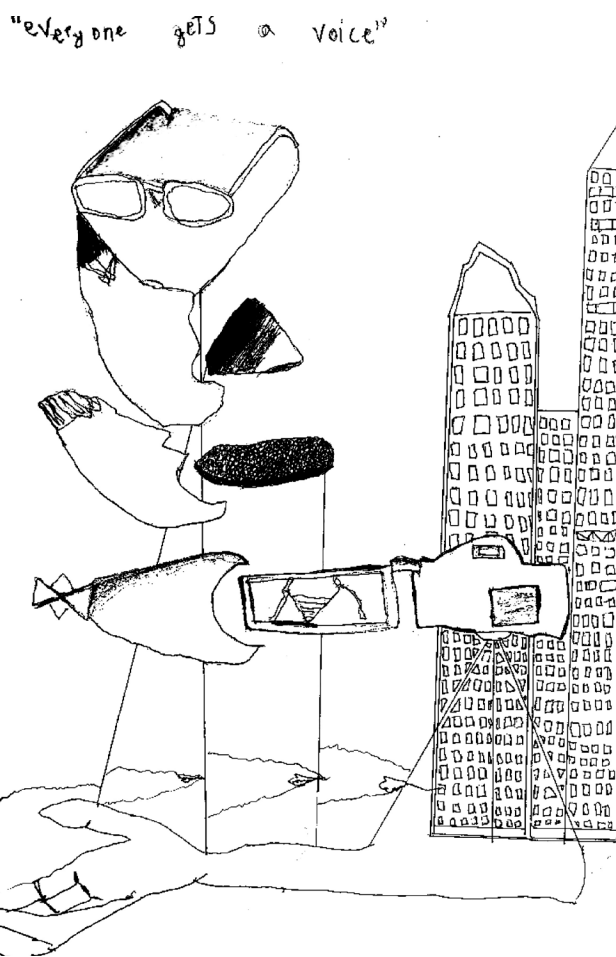
For me and for many others, these strategic models provided necessary guidance and structure when we were learning how to effectively fight for social change. In my experience, however, they can also invite a certain level of doctrinal rigidity (the title of Alinsky's "Rules for Radicals" is fairly explicit about that invitation). Yet here we were at Occupy, our numbers swelling, new tents popping up daily, without a winnable goal, a strategy, or a clear target in sight. I felt incredibly motivated, felt that I was part of something of deep political import—and yet Occupy cleared none of the evaluatory hurdles that I had been taught to use to assess success. We had implemented encampment very effectively, but to my mind, it was a tactic if there ever was one—and what goal was it advancing, really? If Occupy was a campaign, it was a really bad one. And if Occupy wasn't a campaign, what the hell were we doing?

And there it was: Occupy isn't a campaign at all. It's a community, a self-generated one, built from the ground up with tears, sweat, and tarps. Encampment, I've come to realize, was never just a tactic. It was an act of political theater, an activist boot camp—but it also served as an incubator of a new organizing culture. The traditional organizing models I grew up with assume pre-existing community: a neighborhood, a student body, a workplace. At Occupy, we created a new community from a group of disparate individual members of society—unemployed, students, union members, the homeless. Encampment gave us the proving ground we needed to build the internal relationships and trust necessary for collective political effort, and it allowed us to develop our own unique culture. In the encampment stage, Occupy could successfully break the fundamental rules of campaign organizing, including the necessity of demands, precisely because we were not doing campaign work. We were doing culture work.

So now, post-eviction, we move forward from the challenges of physical encampment—bathrooms and water-proofing, permits and sanitation—on to the challenges of maintaining decentralized organization without shared,



has been and continues to be realized every day against, for example (and it is only one example), young black men. I am told that the tuition hikes have been a long time coming; that the erosion of at least one California dream started back when I was too young to remember. I am told nothing like an encampment on the steps of our administrative buildings is going to stop it. And I am told there could be something like free and open education. People are talking like this. The scene at hand, the video on my computer, is the always-already, the now, the might be. This is the closest I can get to understanding what they keep calling the demand-less, leaderless hope. I still want to be able to tell you what has happened. I try to gather together conversations that, like shells, strike me as completely different. I want to string them together as evidence of some ineluctable change in consciousness. I am angry when people dismiss certain facts as distractions, but still too when others make declarations like "Occupy has no ideology only a 'poetics.'" Is this because the community is cause enough, and I was recruited to it from the beginning? The hardest thing is not bearing with the indeterminacy, but being in disagreement with those I've come to respect. Maybe we are held together in common by each of us learning to be each other's everyday enemies. Maybe someday we will find a different kind of common ground. Meanwhile, I've been waiting for that bulldozer of the mind, which will leave me, if not radicalized, then at least clear-headed and ready.



"EVERYONE GETS A VOICE" ILLUSTRATION BY DAVEY FIELD

path for the arrests. A low chanting in the background can be heard: Shame, shame. That period of calmed agitation, which is also a strange, orderly distress, seems to me to be something like a figure for the present moment. The camera doesn't know how it will turn out, whether the crowd will disperse or gather together again. It doesn't know that eventually they will come together to avenge with a hortatory chant, that this will persuade the police to gather, too, and retreat. It doesn't know that the following night as Chancellor Linda Katehi walks to her car, after she has declined to comment on the violence, silence will be used as a weapon.

5. A feeling emerges, at a certain time and in a certain place, that something has happened. It seems to slip backward and forward from this uncertain space in front of me as I write. I am told a group of relatively enfranchised people are brutalized in the bright afternoon on a highly visible college campus because violence is an always-already possibility of institutional and state power; I am told this violence only lies latent in particular places of privilege, but that in other places, less visible but not far from campus, it

centralized space. Physical occupation allowed us to develop a new, relationship-based community—a process vital for our movement, and one for which we had no model. Now, as a trusting community, we can finally begin to focus less on the practicality of camp maintenance, and to dream more about how Occupy can become a force to transform the economic realities of our world. Occupy Philly has the potential to keep the powerful on edge through the kind of surprise direct action we've already employed, and there will be ample opportunity and cause for such resistance: Sunoco's planned casual mass layoffs at the Marcus Hook and South Philadelphia refineries, our community college's demands for painful concessions from its teachers' union, Verizon's refusal to bargain with its employees, and the irresponsible behavior of nonprofit conglomerates like the University of Pennsylvania.

As our direct action working groups swell, bolstered by the new availability of activists previously preoccupied with the day-to-day needs of encampment working groups like safety and sanitation, we are also beginning to accumulate enough organizing strength to contemplate the kind of sustained, targeted campaign work that could affect change on problematic local issues. Here, too, there are plenty of examples of practices that beg for change: Mayor Michael Nutter's racist curfew, or Philadelphia's embarrassing record of cutting tax abatement deals on corporate development projects like the Comcast

building. This is where the information contained in strategic campaign work trainings becomes an asset rather than a liability, with the potential to guide us forward rather than limit our work. In transmitting this knowledge, unions and organizations like Jobs with Justice can continue to be helpful partners in the work of building Occupy. We have learned the valuable lesson that Occupy does not need to be a campaign, and it is energizing and exciting to realize that this movement is nearly positioned to run one without being subsumed by it.

BRANDON HARRIS

OCCUPY CINC

On November 21st, the day before I boarded a MegaBus in midtown Manhattan so I could spend Thanksgiving in my hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio and exactly one month after Occupy Cincinnati's encampment had been raided (and twenty-three arrested), McClatchy published an article titled "Highest income-inequality tract is gentrifying." It detailed how a new Census Bureau report revealed that Census Tract 17, made up of the northernmost portion of Cincinnati's largely blighted, historically significant

Over The Rhine neighborhood, had the most significant gap between its richest and poorest citizens of any neighborhood in the country. With over two-thirds of its 321 households earning less than \$10,000 a year, three percent of the households taking in between \$100,000 and \$150,000 a year and another three percent taking in over \$200,000 annually, there is no place in the United States where you are likely to see crushing poverty within short walking distance from leisurely affluence. And now the hipsters were moving in.

I've spent a significant amount of time in Tract 17 over the last year and a half. Frequently the lone person of color among a largely white social circle, one which stretches back to my days attending some of the city's most vaunted schools, one desperate summer of making a feature film and a series melancholy holidays have brought me back to the apartments and saloons of gentrification frontiersmen who've taken to the lower part of Mt. Auburn or the northern reaches of Over the Rhine, just north of Liberty Street. That this extreme socioeconomic stratification exists in such close quarters is, of course, not news to anyone who lives in or has spent significant time in the area. And it is especially not news to me, since I've routinely lived for the past decade on less than \$10,000 a year in a city that is much more expensive than Cincinnati, while having been educated within and employed by institutions that give me the opportunity to make close friends and have vague acquaintanceships with people who make much, much more.

Visiting some of the individuals who live on Cincinnati's gentrification frontier the weekend after Thanksgiving, conversation would drift to Occupy Wall Street, with a palpable drop in interest from some in attendance. Occupy Cincinnati went unmentioned, before talk wandered back

to when to go to which bar/club after how many drinks when.... To most of these well-to-do young people, none of whom had been down to the encampment, or to any of the marches, the notion that they could or should attempt to be a part of a movement to address social problems is quaint. Certainly, for scions of some of the city's most well-endowed families, income inequality was not their fight. They issued little enthusiasm. This set was too demure, to self-consciously aligned with the status quo, whatever their assumed liberalism (at least on social issues) would indicate, to challenge the great quandary of our times in such a personal way. The mere fact that I had mentioned Occupy Cincinnati meant I was irrepressibly square on some level. Political activism might get in the way of going to The Ass Ponys show that night.

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As it happens, Cincinnati is one of America's most segregated cities, the site of the last large-scale, racially tinged, police-brutality-inspired major urban rebellion among the poor and colored, in 2001, following the shooting death of unarmed, nineteen year old Over the Rhine resident Timothy Thomas, a name that instantly evokes a grotesque period in the city's recent past and its ever unsolvable, but now largely ignored, race problem. The city center leans moderately progressive, surrounding precincts, much less so. In the wake of former Lehman Brothers Managing Director and current Ohio Governor John Kasich's stirring defeat on SB5, which would have limited collective bargaining rights for Ohio public sector workers, the city elected its seemingly most progressive council in a generation, with seven Democrats out of nine members, and for the first time ever, a majority of blacks. Still, House Speaker

Geoffrey Wildanger

OCCUPY UC DAVIS

I write this, here at UC Davis, one week after a general assembly was attended by about 5,000 people. One week after a press conference by Chancellor Linda P. B. Katehi was protested by 1,000.

I write this on the day that the UC Regents will meet via teleconference to decide whether to raise UC tuition by 81 percent. They originally planned to hold the meeting last week in San Francisco but rescheduled due to fears of too many protesters. Their fears were well justified. The general assembly at Davis called for a strike on the UC campuses today. Other campuses have taken up the challenge and are organizing for the strike, particularly Santa Cruz and Berkeley.

But none of this is why UC Davis is in the local, national, and international news. Stories about Davis are everywhere because on Friday, November 18, Lt. John Pike pepper-sprayed seated, nonviolent student protesters (myself included) with the nonchalance one typically associates with a stroll in the park. Lt. Pike that Friday put the banality of police violence on display.

About ten of us were pepper-sprayed and the same number were arrested; several were taken to the emergency room and two were hospitalized—all to remove a few tents from the quad outside the student union. What could have been so threatening about a few tents?

I first saw the thirty-five riot police as I was leaving seminar with a friend, Kevin Smith, to grab a coffee with our professor. It was around 3:15 PM, and, turning to the professor, Kevin and I pointed to the cops and said we had to deal with more pressing issues than Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. All three of us walked toward the tents, and our professor joined approximately 200 onlookers as Kevin and I linked arms with the seventy or so protesters

encircling the tents. We began chanting as the cops marched towards us in formation, and we continued as they gave us the order to disperse.

A prominent poet who teaches on campus approached me and another friend, Sophia Kamran, betting us a dollar we couldn't get the crowd to chant, "Cops off campus!" We did, and he still owes us that dollar.

The cops lined up to march against us, then ran into us to start making arrests. They were able to arrest several, starting with our longtime comrade and unofficial "know your rights" trainer, and we unarrested a couple.

They threw a number to the ground, including Kevin, who had a cast on his arm after a recent surgery. Incensed by this show of violence, about half the onlookers flooded our circle; some took tents away for safekeeping while others stood among us and joined our chant: "Cops off campus!" Those of us linking arms, seeing the police gather the arrested in the middle of our circle, stood up and reformed a large circle around the police and their prisoners. We yelled that we'd disperse when they let our friends go (an entirely reasonable demand, considering that the police can simply cite and release for a misdemeanor).

Pike walked up to those seated on the walkway and threatened that he and the others would shoot us with their pepper-spray paintball guns. At least that's what we assumed he meant—all he said was, "Move or we'll shoot." We sat tight. I lifted up my coat collar and pulled my scarf around my mouth in preparation. Instead of shooting, however, he stepped over us, out of the circle, and pepper-sprayed us.

Pepper spray hurts a lot. Apparently it was "military grade" pepper spray, which causes a fatality in one out of every six hundred uses. One young woman was hospitalized for chemical burns. An asthmatic went into shock. One of us, sprayed in the mouth, vomited blood for forty-five minutes, and two more also went to the hospital where each needed an entire IV bag of saline solution per eye to stop the burning. Many of our hands burned for hours afterwards. For two days, my eyes burned when I took a shower (hot water activates pepper spray, so, if you do get sprayed, take a very cold shower afterward and don't iron your clothes).

John Boehner, who went to the same all-boys Catholic high school I did in Cincinnati's northern suburbs and years before he became speaker was principally known as a man who handed out checks from lobbyists to GOP congressman on the House floor itself, represents the district just northwest of the city proper.

How to move forward in a place like this?

Occupy Cincinnati's former encampment and current nerve center is Piatt Park, a slender green space two blocks long that sits between the motor lanes of Garfield Place from Vine to Elm Streets downtown. Swifter than most cities, Cincinnati Police quickly and violently did away with the budding occupation during a late night raid, eerily foreshadowing the incidents we would see at Occupy encampments around the country in the next month and a half. Since then it has become the site of a daily general assembly and a protest that begins at ten each night. Attendance at the assembly and the protest actions panned by various Occupy associated groups fluctuates due to a variety of factors. Cincinnati, for example, is simply a difficult city to travel in. The greater Cincinnati area has minimal public transportation and is bloated by suburban sprawl. Roughly the same number of people who lived in Cincinnati proper forty years ago now take up ten times the amount of space, with only a fraction of them still living within the city center.

The couple of times I dropped by Occupy Cincinnati's general assembly during the week of Thanksgiving, there weren't many more than twenty people in attendance, although some nights the Livestream appears to reveal somewhere between fifty and seventy-five. A thousand or so had participated in a series of recent marches and instances of street theater, at actions directed at major local mortgage lender Fifth/Third Bank, and in various

Fountain Square rallies. Jesse Jackson happened by Piatt Park one evening and gave a surprisingly stirring speech, which emboldened many to reoccupy the space. Fifteen protesters were arrested that night when they refused to leave after it closed. Jackson came back to congratulate them the following afternoon, by which time only a few of those arrested had been released.

Still, Occupy Cincinnati couldn't manage to stage an Occupy Our Homes action on Tuesday December 6th. Too few foreclosed homeowners could be found to help reclaim their properties, despite the preponderance of foreclosed houses in central Cincinnati neighborhoods like Avondale, Madisonville, Roselawn and Bond Hill, all of which have endured long bouts of economic and infrastructural decline. On its Facebook page, Occupy the Hood claimed to have found "OVER 30 TRASHED, ABANDONED, FORCLOSED HOMES IN THE AVONDALE AREA," but the former occupants of those homes, the very people who need our help reclaiming them, had long abandoned the properties, either voluntarily or by force. Instead occupiers teamed up to beautify the properties, so as to restore them to livability for the ostensibly itinerant folks who used to live there, should they be found.

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On Thanksgiving Day in Cincinnati, I often find myself at a few dinner tables. This is perhaps not so uncommon, especially for the expatriate children of increasingly fractured, middle class, black American families. There is work to do, campaign stops to make ("Yes, we're all fine, work is great!"), food and football to digest, but perhaps not the communion one would think the holiday meant for. I am frequently obliged to pay my respects to an entire network of individuals during

these visits, some immediate family, cousins and aunts and the few living grandparents, members of a generation becoming increasingly scarce, the last ones among us to live significant adult lives in the specter of the brutality of pre-Civil Rights American racism. Yet I remain somewhat of an outsider in these parts, having fled to the east coast as a young man, looking for a life more open to the possibilities of freedom (and perhaps a bit of recognition as an artist of one sort or another) than the strange brew of black Christian literalism, moderate African Methodist Episcopalianism and Negro middle class striver ethic that defined our brood. This divide is never more evident than when the discussion switches to contemporary activism.

The mere mention of Occupy Cincinnati at both my father and mother's Thanksgiving Day feasts were met with mild derision from some of those in attendance, less than bellicose support from others, and mostly blank stares from my father, a talented baker who had ignored his diabetes and made half a dozen pies for less than a dozen people. My mother, once a liberation theology black radical of sorts—one who nonetheless spent much of her adult life not seeing the value of unions and building suburban homes in mostly middle class black neighborhoods, many of which were financed by subprime mortgages even when her clients qualified for better terms—bought my counterpoints to these arguments hook, line and sinker. But in the presence of her Thanksgiving Day company, she sought only to keep the piece and enjoy the rather succulent meal she had prepared.

Still, subject should have been of great urgency to everyone in our midst. Sixteen years ago, during the era of welfare reform, when subprime mortgages were being devised at Andrew Cuomo's HUD, and the concept of infinite growth and the end

of history were being plausibly discussed by seemingly thoughtful individuals, my father's janitorial service, which has been largely built around contracts that allowed him and a small crew to clean the inner corridors of Proctor & Gamble's massive Ivorydale production site (a veritable city of soap) crumbled. His sliding class status was in stark contrast to my mother's, who lucratively built new homes in working class black communities for a living, until she didn't. A business that largely thrived because of predatory lending in previously redlined communities isn't built to last. She and many others, having gone through most of the money they saved for retirement over nearly an entire lifetime, having lost their homes and careers, are the human fallout. Yet many don't see the connection between the work of the Occupy Movement and their own plight.

"Most of the people out there don't look like us," said my mother's friend Cheryl during dinner, questioning whether the Occupy movement was inclusive of people of color. "I just didn't see that many black people there," she continued, suggesting that this, and this alone, was a reason to be skeptical of the mettle and intentions of the activists. This perception, that the Occupy movement is a thing by and for white activists, however untrue, has gained some traction within many black communities.

Anyone who has spent ample time in black America will tell you that grievances toward the state run high. People know intuitively what is going on. Often they don't know the exact culprits, allowing a pervasive but unfocused cynicism toward the white power structure to exist. Still, blacks here in the States have long been privy to the fact that the powers that be are corrupt and seek no justice on their behalf, with an understanding that antagonism does not just come from Republican

No one expected UC Davis to become world famous for police brutality. It's a nice, land-grant university in a small town, a school more famous for its cows than its cops. And so, when a cop here acted with the same brazen disregard for decency that police display elsewhere—in poorer communities, against people of color—it made the news.

But how Lt. Pike behaved on Friday, with the authorization of Police Chief Annette Spicuzza (now on administrative leave) and Chancellor Katehi, is not exceptional. We know this in Davis, a mere hour drive from Oakland—the memory of Oscar Grant is with us constantly.

The violence of the police on my campus has unified the community in a way I have never before seen. Hundreds of alumni drove in to attend a rally. Children from a local school baked cookies for those pepper-sprayed. Thousands of students who had never been to a protest before attended a general assembly.

The community has unified around one serious demand: Chancellor Katehi must resign. She must resign not only because of what happened last Friday. That would presume that her actions last week were not part of a larger pattern. Rather, she must resign because she has followed the path of privatization set by University of California President Mark Yudof. This privatization plan—let's call it austerity—has been enforced by cops. The police have enforced austerity in California as they have in Egypt, London, and Greece.

While November 18 highlighted the issue of police brutality at Davis (as earlier protests did at Berkeley), this brutality is inseparable from the austerity and financialization against which the global occupation movement is struggling. Last Sunday, during an attempt to retake Tahrir Square from the violent military dictatorship that has lost its presidential figurehead, thirty-three people were murdered. The struggle there continues. The struggle against austerity continues in Athens. The fight against oppressive governments, against austerity, against police violence and racism and homophobia—against capitalism—continues.

On the UC campuses, we do not always experience our struggle as being against a big concept like capitalism. Right now at Davis, we see a few things that really make us mad: the actions of Lt. Pike and Chancellor Katehi, and the noose-referencing graffiti that appeared during the students of color conference. Some of us see these as the problems we have to fix. We can demand that Katehi resign, that Pike be put on trial, and that the Cross Cultural Center on campus get more funding.

But of whom can we demand changes that go beyond quick fixes? The phrase most associated with the UC struggles (and my second favorite) is "Occupy everything, demand nothing!" We do not demand "nothing" because there is nothing that we want. To the contrary, we make no demands because there is no existing authority that could give us what we want. But when we come together, we create the power to realize our demands. Insofar as these are "our universities," "our streets," "our public spaces," and "our buildings," it is our task to radically transform them to transform the social relations for which they exist.

This brings me to my favorite phrase associated with the UC struggle: "You will never be lonely again."

We do make demands we make demands of ourselves, as we realize new social relations, new types of friendship, even new types of love. We occupy space not only to proclaim our existence. We occupy space to communize it. We occupy space to decolonize it.

We occupy so that we can change human nature.

Last Friday, I was very mad at the cops. What they did was unforgivable. But by the end of the day, anger was no longer my primary feeling. Instead I felt joy and love toward all the people I'd been talking to and trying to organize for years who that day went from looking at us to standing with us.

I was happy because, after being pepper-sprayed, in terrible pain, we stood together and marched the cops off the quad, chanting, "You can go."

I was happy because I felt proud. I felt proud to be a UC Davis student and a member of a community that was suddenly so unified.

politicians and racist police forces, but also the very white liberals that often spearhead the gentrification of their communities. No paternalism goes unnoticed here.

Yet most of the occupiers I talked to over the long holiday, from a queer white girl who grew up in the lower middle class enclave of Kennedy Heights to a light skinned, upper middle class man of mixed race who went to the city's most prestigious high school and has an advanced degree from Yale, feel and fear the same things that the desperate-to-stay-working class black women who eat at my Mother's dinner table do. They all suffer from plummeting home values, ever more expensive health care and energy prices, and many are pushing themselves through service industry careers in fields that have long since stagnated or fallen completely by the wayside.

None of them however—neither those who make up the broad majority of the occupiers nor my mother's ilk—would be risking as much as the impoverished black men in Tract 17 to engage in civil disobedient protest in the United States, even passively and non-violently. In some parts of Over the Rhine, one would be hard pressed to find a young black man who does not have some sort of criminal record, usually for the slightest of offenses. The stakes for second or third time offenders from the black underclass, who nearly never have access to their own legal representation other than court appointed defenders, are high. They are seen de facto criminals by the city's police establishment and as unemployable by the posh new

businesses opening in their neighborhood. Their grievances are many and they have little reason to believe, at present time, that protesting and civil disobedience is a safe way to navigate the troubled waters of inner city poverty.

How to convince people in central Cincinnati, in East St. Louis, in Bedford-Stuyvesant and Watts, who have been victimized by the drug war, reverse redlining, stop and frisk, the decline of American industrialization (the oldest of whom still have visceral memories of the struggle for civil rights) to join us? They are already with us in minds, if not their hearts. This is a time to see the limitations we have imposed upon ourselves, conditioned by culture and habit, and sail past them. We must be bold, we must take risks, we must add to our ranks. If the active portion of the 99 percent is to include men in the northern reaches of Over the Rhine and equally disenfranchised people of color all over this country, it will require no small amount of courage, empathy and commitment from everyone involved in our struggle to make them feel welcomed and secure and appreciated.

I'd like to think that strong rhetoric and fierce determination, earnest and consistent appeals to action, airtight facts and courageousness, will be enough for the Occupy Movement to change the world. I increasingly suspect, however, after yet another melancholy trip home, that an invigorating sense of bother and sisterhood between many more of us, from those at the very bottom of the 99 percent to those at the very top, is the element we most desperately need.

CHRISTOPHER HERRING AND ZOLTAN GLUCK

Re-Articulating the Struggle for Education: From Berkeley to New York

I. New Alliances in New York

The space on the second floor of 90 Fifth Avenue was (and is) a fairly bland and sterile study center for the New School, but for eight days it was transformed. On November 17th, as three thousand students marched down Fifth Avenue, a coalition of students from schools across the city stormed the building and claimed the space as open and free for all. Political differences emerged among the occupiers immediately, and cohabitation only deepened them, but the constant flow of teach-ins, workshops, lectures, film screenings, meetings, and general assemblies turned the arguments into challenges to build something together. The more fragile alliances gave way to real political rifts when we confronted the reality of eviction. Other alliances survived. Both the sense of collective struggle fostered in that space and the political fault lines that emerged are instructive in understanding the new terrain of possible alliances within a nascent student movement during the deepening crisis of neoliberalism.

On day three, after one of the NYC Student Assemblies, I remember someone lauding the occupation profusely: "This kind of thing hasn't happened since the sixties!" The student was from one of the private schools in the city, and I felt an urge to interject. I thought, No, there actually is a long and important history of struggle over public education in this city; building occupations happened at CUNY from the '70s through the '90s; black and Latino students have been fighting for and defending their right to higher education since the '60s; and the CUNY-wide general assembly

KRISTIN PARKER

DISPATCH FROM THE AUDRE LORDE—HOWARD ZINN LIBRARY AT OCCUPY BOSTON

My phone buzzed. "They're going to evict us by midnight" a quiet, despondent voice said. "Fuck." I replied. "I'll be right there." I was standing in a museum's art storage room (where I spend most of my professional life) talking to my boss. He saw my face fall. I shared the news and tears welled up. I wanted sob angrily, but instead swallowed hard, took a deep breath and asked permission to leave the office. My boss, an understanding former hippie, said "You go do what you have to do." The support we've received at Occupy Boston—support most of you readers have also experienced—is incredible. All these little contributions—my boss allowing me

to leave work without hassle so I could go save the library at Occupy Boston—mean that our work can continue.

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The first incarnation of the library at Occupy Boston was established immediately, in the form of a small orange and white tent, with one white painted bookshelf full of novels and some camping blankets inside. Other tents—food, logistics, spirituality and medical—were more established by one week into the occupation. In roared John Ford, heart-on-his-sleeve, vegan, punk rocker and Boston classic, whose more ferocious displays of commitment were characterized as "donkey kong" by other occupiers. He pulled up to the site in his military ambulance, the back loaded with cranberry crates filled with books. He had packed up a third of his personal collection out of Metacomet books in Plymouth, MA—the shop he runs/ran—a military tent and other supplies, and landed with impact at Dewey Square (read his account at therovinghouse.com), giving the library greater presence on site.

The Progressive Librarians Guild at Simmons College and the Boston Radical Reference Collective reached out to John, who welcomed the rad refs, and the

stands in a long tradition of radicalism and resistance. But on this last point I paused. The CUNY-wide assembly was actually going to convene in the occupied space on the following day. How had it come to pass that the historic struggle over public education was now being waged alongside students from private universities and in a shared space we were collectively trying to build? How was it that students from some of the most elite institutions in the country, who pay more for a year of school than most CUNY students pay for their whole education, were now seemingly fighting the same fight? Without immediately being able to answer these questions, I realized that, whatever the fate of our experiment at 90 Fifth Avenue, Occupy Wall Street had begun to shift the coordinates of the struggle over education.

Monday, November 21st was the last day of the Week of Action, and in many ways the actions and events of that day captured our new shared terrain. In the morning, members of the NYC Student Assembly and the OWS Student Debt Working Group met at Zuccotti Park to launch Occupy Student Debt, a national student debt refusal pledge that will prompt a collective default if one million people sign on. These were for the most part private school students taking aim at the financial institutions that profit off their education. Then the pledgers converged with CUNY students protesting the latest round of tuition hikes, and we marched together to the board of trustees meeting at Baruch College. We stood our ground together as CUNY campus security beat and arrested dozens of students.

Since the eviction, the New York City Student Assembly has continued to convene and plan actions. Our alliance is not only formal or symbolic but also very much material: our situations are the product of the same economic structures, which have simultaneously turned public education into a privatized commodity and transformed students into highly indebted consumers. Occupy has helped us voice our common predicament and opened new avenues for collective struggle.

II. UC Berkeley: Crafting New Tactics and Discourses

Student activism for public education is nothing new in the UC system, and the last decade has seen a resurgence of action surrounding the system's disinvestment. This is largely due to the fact that privatization is no longer encroaching upon the institution at its old glacial pace, remaining largely invisible to rotating cohorts of students, but instead so rapidly accelerating

three units joined forces to form a library working group. We're made up of at least 20 librarians, many who are Simmons College library grads with a range of skills. I'm an archivist and bring an interest in preservation strategies, so we might actively archive the movement as it happens).

Weekly meetings were held, donations of books flowed in, a check out system was established. The library became a buzzing hub of activity, while still offering respite to the sometimes organized chaos of the camp. It was cozy space, with a braided rug on the floor, christmas lights along the ceiling (powered by an outlet provided by the Greenway Conservancy), and always warm. John even constructed a coat check in a tent vestibule, so we could hang up wet jackets. One wall was covered with post it notes written on by visitors. "What are your favorite resources?" we asked. People wrote on Post-It notes: part-sandcrafts.org, Al Jazeera, Dharma Punx, Crimthinc.org, old people's stories.

The tent had one comical irritant—the tough velcro strip at the entrance would

snatch knitted caps off our visitors, decorating the door with a colorful woolen bunting. People often ducked in through the tent flaps, sigh and say "I LOVE libraries!". Patrons checked out books on a card catalog slip, simply writing down the title, and walked away, beaming, with a book or two under their arm. Our current catalog has over 100 books checked out.

Like most reference librarians, often day-to-day work was often shelved in order to respond to queries. Eager high school students would come in, wide eyed and nervous, clutching video cameras and pages of interview questions. Families with children would poke around curiously. Pairs of ladies, coat lapels covered with activist buttons would tiptoe in together, sharing their knowledge and quizzing mine. Authors would speak at the lecture series and drop off their books. One couple told us we were going to suffer an earthquake and should vacate the area immediately. I sometimes felt like some sort of therapist, and spent a lot of time listening to people share their ideas for

the movement. "Occupy should start an independent party! Everyone would vote for you!" ranted one man. "This movement changed my life. I've been waiting for these conversations my whole life," said a gentle girl from the suburbs. "No one talks about things like this where I live." Often, I'd be in the middle of a conversation, or giving an orientation, and someone from Media or the Free School would come tearing in to dig through bins of extension cords and microphones stashed under the political history section. I don't think I ever sat down the entire time I worked the tent. We were always hopping, bending, shelving, carrying, pausing, piling. John sometimes spent the night in the library, rigging the door with bells and wind chimes to alert him if strangers entered looking for a place to crash. An unfortunate symptom of the durable military tent's thick walls was that they were opaque, making the library an attractive lure for drug users to light up, undetected.

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Librarians are disaster planners by trade. We're trained in preservation and understand the ephemeral in this digital era. In this way, we're well suited to run a library in a protest environment. By early November we'd created an emergency

plan of action that included a phone tree and safe houses for the collection. After "Sinkgate" (in order to address sanitation issues, some MIT friends designed a self-contained sink, which the police refused to let into camp, almost causing a riot) we began to feel more nervous about the longevity of the camp, though we continued our normal planning. We reconsidered cataloging, as we watched the awful raids happening at other occupations across the country. Once we learned that the restraining order against the City of Boston and Boston Police Department was lifted, we knew how vulnerable we were. That night, while some of us attended a huge General Assembly, librarian Anna Rothman sat in the tent, diligently cataloging over 800 books in a few hours. Amazing! (This quick cataloging was made possible through Librarything.com—a way of barcode scanning books). We packed up the "vital documents"—Occupy Boston's organizational documents that we've been archiving, 'zines, pamphlets and other irreplaceable ephemera and moved them off site. We were reluctant to pack up books before an official eviction notice, as we didn't want to appear like we were abandoning the camp. In fact, during some library meetings, we discussed



then has had to pay for cuts to public education? A. Us, the 99%." Finally, it indicted our Board of Regents, most of whom are members of the corporate elite.

In addition to changing the student movement's discourse, Occupy has also changed its tactics. Inspired by the Oakland, San Francisco, and Berkeley occupations, the university day of action ended with the establishment of OccupyCal. The occupation drew thousands of students as well occupiers from surrounding cities and community members attending their first occupy and student movement rallies. Protest signs were no longer aimed at the state but at the bastions of finance: "MAKE BANKS REFUND EDUCATION." The students did not simply walk past the Bank of America branch on their traditional march up Telegraph Ave., but successfully closed it down.

Not unlike other actions against enclosures of the commons, the university occupation was met with brutal force. Once occupiers pitched the first tent, a phalanx of county police officers clad in riot armor, invited onto campus by the administration, used their batons to beat nonviolent student and faculty protesters who had linked arms around the encampment. Outrage about the attacks only drew more public support, which culminated in the successful reestablishment of the camp in the presence of thousands of supporters the next week. The encampment now hosts an open university that has featured prominent professors giving lectures on public education and the underlying questions of the Occupy movement.

III. Re-articulating Education

What the Occupy movement has brought to light, in the cases of the New York and Berkeley student movements, is that the privatization and financialization of education are connected processes at the heart of neoliberalism. This recognition has shifted the student movement discourse from a narrow conversations about tuition to a broader one about a system of corporate predation that makes higher education unaffordable, inaccessible, and reliant on unsustainable debt-financing and speculation. Today both public and private institutions are complicit in the general reproduction of structures of social inequality: through privatization (shifting the cost of education from the public to "consumers") and financialization (the increasing reliance on debt to finance education), traditionally marginalized and working class communities are further excluded from higher



PHOTO UNCREDITED

that its effects are acutely felt each year. Since 2006, tuition has risen from \$6,600 to \$13,360, class sizes have expanded at the same time that classes have become harder to get into, departments and programs have been cut, and the proportion of out-of-state students has grown. In response to this academic restructuring—designed to convert a public good into a private commodity—students, faculty, and community members have gathered in solidarity each fall to challenge the state's privatization and disinvestment of what is widely considered the world's greatest public university system. But this year was different, and it is no small part due to the Occupy movement.

The Occupy Effect first became apparent to me when I received the talking points packet given to graduate student activists who make in-class presentations to undergrads about the cuts and planned actions. I'd given this presentation in previous years and the script was always the same—simply piling on the latest statistics about deepening cuts, ascending fees, and obscene salary increases for administrators. However, this year's script did not just calculate the latest casualties, but instead radically re-framed the discussion of public education around the issues and discourses at the heart of the Occupy movement. First, it pointed out that the latest round of cuts were a product of Wall Street's reckless decisions: "Q. Does anyone know how much funding has been cut from CA public education since 2009 at the peak of the crisis caused by Wall Street? A. \$17 Billion." Second, it debunked the myth that there is simply no money to maintain the UC system: "Q. Does anyone know how the super-rich have done during this time? A. Because of our bailouts, American corporation's average profits rose 29.2 percent in 2010. In 2010, average CEO pay rose 23 percent, for an average of \$11.4 million." Third, it acknowledged the cost-shift: "Q. Who

surrounding the library with our bodies and leaving the books in place in the event of a raid, but we knew, in the end, that the police would destroy our collection, which was an unacceptable outcome. Each working group seemed to come to the same conclusion—that we’d protect our operations in such a way that we could re-assemble elsewhere, quickly.

The moment I received the call that we had 24 hours to evict, we decided to activate the phone tree. We thought about leaving one book behind—American Methods by Kristian Williams (which describes U.S. support of torture at home and abroad). I ran to my desk, shot off a few emails, cancelled upcoming appointments and called my husband so he’d know I didn’t plan on getting arrested. I zipped up the Mass Pike to Dewey Square, anxious but focused. By the time I arrived, about 45 minutes after the eviction phone call, the library collection was already

waiting patiently on the sidewalk in its crates. We held up the library banner as we loaded my car and it blew proudly over us as we packed the trunk tight. The wooden cranberry boxes were loaded into John’s ambulance. One carload of books had already left. John was laughing at how fast the librarians mobilized, and the mood at camp was pretty jolly as we packed, all things considered. I think each Occupation probably reflects the character of its city and Boston, well, we strap on our boots and get shit done. We may not be arty like New York or LA, but we’re practical and we’ve got endurance. We built something beautiful together, and we’d break it down together with the same care and contribution. We were pulling together to save our assets. We were NOT going to let the police or the city of Boston determine or deter our course. We felt hopeful, despite the anger. By sundown the library, was stashed safely across the city, ready to be reassembled as Occupy Boston evolves into its next phase.

education, universities are turned into vehicles for capital accumulation, and “the 1 percent” reap billions of dollars in profits from a growing student debt bubble. From this, a new political consciousness and a new counter-movement have at last emerged.

These new alliances are challenging. They must work across class, gender, and racial divisions, must link up with ongoing struggles, and must be aware of their variegated, rich, and often painful histories. Our distinct histories and divisions can easily become political fissures when we do not take them on as the heart of new alliances. At CUNY, this means learning from the important heritage of black and Puerto Rican student struggles in the ‘60s. It also means cultivating new alliances founded upon an understanding of the crisis of education as but one facet of the broader crisis of social reproduction under capitalism. It is in this way the struggle over education will to be re-articulated as one small but important aspect of the broader struggle over the future of our society.

ELI SCHMITT

BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES

The traces of the contemporary college experience are all over the current rhetoric and tactics of OWS. In some aspect, the material conditions of the now-bereft Zuccotti Park (free place to live, free food, group meetings throughout the day you can pop in and out of, lots of people to meet, lots of hanging out) are a lot like college (where room and board aren’t really free, but purport to be). And Zuccotti was also a place people went to learn, to talk to each other, to engage politically. In this way too, it acted, as others have said before me, like a free school.

But there are deeper, more elemental aspects of the contemporary college experience in OWS. Talk, in college, can be pedagogical. Intellectual exchange is an end in itself. Process over product. Patience. This is what you practice in humanities seminars. This is what progressive educators have been teaching for the past century, from John Dewey through Ted Sizer. The desire to be inclusive, coupled with progressive educational values have inflected OWS meetings, which run like long-form seminars on texts that some have read more closely than others. We think it is important to listen to each other. We are not worried about efficiency.

The progressive, inclusive tone that pervades humanities seminars, sociology lectures, and campus activities also dominates the movement. As 21st-century college students, we have been taught that excluding people is bad.

Lili Loofbourow

DECEMBER 12 PORT SHUTDOWN

I’ve learned while following the Occupy movement that no one—including seasoned journalists—can count. The same crowd will consist of 300 in one account, 30,000 in another. So when I say that I joined between 500 and 700 people at the West Oakland BART station at 5:30 a.m. on December 12 to march on the port, I hereby disclose that I was once badly mis-cast as the Weights and Measures “expert” on a Science Olympiad team. I lost the event, badly, and authorize you to salt my estimate accordingly.

As we were about to set off, a sizeable motorcade of police cars, SUVs, and buses turned left, lights ablaze, down Mandela Parkway. We didn’t know it then, but they would amass at Middle Harbor Shoreline Park and congregate around the mast of the USS Oakland, the first ship named for the city of Oakland in 1943. (It only lost 3 crewmembers during its service in World War II, earning it the nickname “the lucky ship.”)

We watched the lights fade silently into the distance and started marching. The Port of Oakland is a futuristic cementscape, and the walk down 7th Avenue prepared us for it with its unrelenting lines—the BART rails, the rows of mail trucks, the interlaced overpasses, the geometric figures on the cement walls. Sometimes you’d come across a steel cable that had broken free of the cement and curled madly. What a relief! I thought, which testifies to the mild lunacy that sets in when marching on deserted roads in the early morning dark. Roads stripped of erratic drivers are uncanny artifacts, mainly because they’re so perfect without

us. Imagine a human artery, then imagine an artery that functions optimally in the absence of blood.

The crowd that had supplanted whatever traffic normally goes down these roads at 5:30 in the morning seemed tentative. Chants weren’t really taking off. Some drummed on paint cans, which sort of helped (anything to interrupt the industrial silence). A man behind me was reading “Howl” out loud. Someone had made a life-size cardboard cutout of pepper-spraying policeman John Pike, and they waved him around. People were trying.

That we got to the tunnel. Anyone who’s been in a crowd in a tunnel knows what happens next: people howl and scream and sing and cheer, drunk on acoustics. That was the case with us, only more so. People shouted in relief, happy to be amplified in this tiny underground, since the surrounding area was so vast and so empty and so silent, except for the BART trains which occasionally roared by overhead. An inhuman microphone, but a welcome one.

From that point onward the pace was a little brisker and the energy was a little brighter, a little less lonely.

We started passing the fields of colored containers—branded, like cows sleeping in the dark: Hamburg Süd, Hapag-Lloyd, Mediterranean Shipping Company. On the right we passed the U.S. Customs and Border Protection building, a derelict white shack partially obscured from view by a Port-A-Potty (brand: United), and surrounded by rusted-over machinery. The DHS seal had partially peeled off the building, beheading the eagle, so that it looked like a crazy chicken with its head cut off was laying a “Homeland Security” egg.

By this point, the police were behind us, bringing up the rear. The crowd split in two: one group went to cover the Total Terminals International terminal (berths 55-56), while the other broke off to join the bicyclists who had gone earlier to start a picket line around the TraPac terminal, berths 30-32.

Trying to be too efficient can exclude voices, but so can many other, more subtle things. We have been taught the word privilege to loosely describe an array of discrepancies between people, from how much money our parents have to our sex to our skin color. These, largely, are not the anxieties of middle America, with its soupy conception of a “fair playing field.” Nor are they especially the anxieties of the professional leftists, ever a boys’ club. They are anxieties that you learn to have during a postmodern liberal education. They are the concerns of the rarified undergraduate, or recent grad.

One might respond here that colleges are definitionally exclusive, simply by virtue of costing money and having limited enrollment. While this is true, it’s also true that at the college I graduated from a six months ago, a group of students spent a while petitioning the administration to make the nearly 250-year-old school tuition-free, with a lottery for admissions. The self-reflexivity one learns in a comp. lit. class (“the text instantiates the reader”) or an anthro lecture (“there is no such thing as an objective observer”) carries over into one’s experience as a student. Thus, even when one is selectively admitted and paying (or borrowing) to be in college, one learns quickly to count one’s self “privileged,” and, if one is so inclined, to rail against that privilege from time to time.

There is an intellectual tradition which gave us these anxieties about privilege and exclusion, which seem to me to be traceable back to when the American political movements of the 1960s drifted into the academy. Many of those political movements took up the mantle of identity politics as a way of remaining relevant to the public sphere. Multiculturalism and its detractors both had their moments. Arguments about diversity and affirmative action raged. We had the still-weirdly named “culture wars.” In this day and age though, it seems these debates have cooled off a little bit. Universities are expected to have diversity quotas, special programs for minority students, and affinity groups for anyone who feels affinity. The French philosophers, the critical theorists,

What follows, in terms of official encounters between protesters and police, is unremarkable: the police lined up in front of the terminal at 55-56 and watched while the protesters marched in a circle. At berths 30-32, the police poured out of a bus and stood in front of a thin line of protesters guarding the road, behind which two circles of protesters marched in front of the two berths. Some protesters were concerned that this was a recipe for kettling, but at no point did this happen. A man meditated in front of the police. Protesters (all of whom seemed to have a camera) filmed. Then, for no clear reason, the police got back in the bus and returned to the mast of the USS Oakland.

Three women dressed in red and posing together in solemn silence like three Statues of Liberty refused to break character, even when word came about the port closures in other cities. A man flew a kite. Someone brought a tent. Food Not Bombs

brought vegetable soup and coffee for the protesters. It drizzled.

A minor power struggle arose over the question of how “public” the public bathrooms were. They had been open to us earlier, although I talked to two male protesters who were waiting outside because the men’s bathroom was full of police, and he was uncomfortable going in until they left. We joked about the police occupying the bathrooms. Later, it seemed like less of a joke: when I came back, the bathroom was suddenly closed. The park security guard, who worked for a private security firm, reported that the bathroom was closed because the park was closed, and the park was closed because the port was closed.

(This, I’m not proud to say, is how I found out that the port was closed.) We asked him whether the park being closed meant that he got to go home. He said no, and told us that the bathrooms ordinarily opened at 8:00 AM (it was 9:00

AM). Then the police saw him talking to us and called him over.

The long and the short of it is that we were referred to a Port-A-Potty on the other side of the park. The issues the Occupy movement are addressing are nested (hilariously) in this story: a private security guard posted a sign on a public bathroom in a public park redirecting us to a Port-A-Potty owned, like the one presiding over the US Customs and Border Protection building, by United, a private corporation. (The name even fits seamlessly into our collective move from public to private—all we need is for United to merge with a company called States, and we won’t even have to change the signs.)

Hovering over the bathroom-struggle and the cowlike-containers and the ocean and the barbed wire and the cement and the tiny police and the tiny protesters are the huge still dinosaurs that have become the most recognizable part of the Oakland skyline: the cranes. A friend and I were walking toward the cranes, past the police, when we noticed that they were donning their riot gear. Several had some kind of long-barreled gun (possibly bean bag guns—I really have no idea). As we walked by, we heard a female police officer say, “We’ll get our helmets on and we’ll get them into the terminal!”

We worried, and we warned the others. I agonized over the strange fragment I’d overheard. What did it mean—“We’ll get them into the terminal”? How would they do this? How could it be legal? Why did they want us in the terminal?

It looked like they were heading toward berths 30-32. We watched as they formed a huge phalanx. I videotaped them for fifteen minutes as they marched to the picket lines. They slipped behind the protesters, single-file, and formed a line between the protesters and the gates to the terminal.

I glanced behind me to see if a second line was coming to surround the protesters. Nope.

They stood there for some time, and then half of the officers (I’d venture there were about 100) went inside the terminal and shut the gate behind them, and stood on the other side of the gate.

And there they remained, until a bus came by later and picked them up.

I’m still mystified by this action, and the part of me that would have enjoyed a career in espionage despairs that the fragment I overheard was about the police strategizing on getting their own people

into the terminal. Especially since they could have gone another way (and did—several buses came in and out carrying police, without going past the protester picket line).

The end of the story is this: the port was shut down. It reopened again briefly, but protesters came back for the evening shift. No longshoremen were called in to work that shift, and the occupiers decided to stay until 3 a.m.

The bigger story here—the one that’s really worth telling, but isn’t mine to tell—belongs to the truckers, who aren’t unionized, and who sat there for hours and lost money that day, and the longshoremen, who stood to lose money too, my solidarity notwithstanding. I have no way of assessing the truckers’ response as a whole; what I can report is that some waved and joked with us. Others, as they turned their trucks around and drove away, honked. And there is a semantics to honking, just as there is to screaming in a tunnel, or doing anything that makes sound in the sonic machine desert of the port: one trucker leaned on his horn as he drove out, making a long never-ending wail. He seemed to be waving as he drove by. Another one honked in a short violent blast at some protesters in the road, tired of having his way blocked. According to Gavin Aronsen of Mother Jones, one kicked at a sign demanding a truckers’ union. Two blew me kisses.

Most of them, though, drove away quietly. Having seen the grey fields where they work, abutting the gorgeous bay with its twinkling bridges and skylines, I can’t decide if they’re the shepherds or the cowboys of our lives. Or whether herding those huge branded metal cows across the country is the noble stuff of myth or a post-industrial nightmare. But they are the opposite of those roads I walked in the early morning, those efficient roads which work best unpeopled. They’re the inconvenient strain, the part an engineer would like least because of wear and tear, and inefficiency, and the need to eat and drink and rest. They’re the best part of all this and I apologize, personally, if my actions hurt them. My hope is that this small story is part of a bigger one that will reframe the truth—that they are among the few living things in that inanimate vastness—as something good and right and marvelously alive, with all that implies and yes, demands, rather than a stumbling-block to profit and progress.



“ALL DAY EVERYDAY” ILLUSTRATION BY CANNON DILL VIA OCCUPYPRINT.ORG

and the psychoanalysts gave us a vocabulary, whereby we now can interrogate the oppression coded into various discourses.

This is why OWSers worry about shuffling women, and people of color to be first on the list of speakers (a.k.a. progressive stack) or whether a person of color has recently been a facilitator of the spokes council, or whether we are adequately reaching out to queer people. The concern is not for fairness. It is past fairness. Rather we are concerned about justice. The belief is that justice is achieved by a kind of affirmative action, the displacement of oppression through deliberate and systematic redress. And while OWS is not perfectly just, it is something. Compare Jo Freeman’s account of bringing a resolution about women’s issues to the NCNP convention in 1967 with Manissa Maharawal’s account of trying to change the wording of a declaration at OWS (see OCCUPY Gazette #1). It’s not that everyone came to OWS totally well-versed in the conventions of identity politics and political correctness, but unlike in 1967, a few interested minorities today are taken as seriously, if not more seriously, than their historically privileged (read: straight white dude) counterparts.

The effect of this anxiety about exclusion (and concomitant intense desire for inclusion) is not exactly philosophically grounded, however. There is a fear of taking an ideological hard line because it will disenfranchise our people.

Though postmodernism has offered up many critiques of “tolerance” as a political position, the left-leaning, identity-politics-inflected conscientiousness of today’s undergraduate tends to address the problems of privilege and exclusion through tolerance. If the Social Democrats are the voice of the movement, the radical anarchists will be pissed, and vice versa. People from across the left-leaning spectrum came together for OWS, but even over the course of this fall, so-called “ultra-leftists” have expressed disgust with the movement, while moderates have wondered if OWS was “too radical.” What remains of the movement’s cohesiveness—as a group of people (a loose crew of hundreds, maybe more) that hangs out, works together, marches together—is sustained by avoiding possibly alienating leadership and possibly divisive demands. The reality of a heavily college-inflected OWS is that at some very basic level, in order not to exclude anyone, the only thing the group can demand is “take us seriously, let us talk to each other and you, don’t be a jerk.” Much in the way that it is hard to get kicked out of college, it is pretty hard to get kicked out of the OCCUPY movement.

Much like, dare I say it, a college campus, where you are constantly meeting people and running into acquaintances by virtue of proximity, Zuccotti fulfilled a social function for the fledgling Occupy movement. The November 14th raid not only destroyed an external public face (which many have noted

was beginning to show signs of deformity) but also denied us an internal space, where, as on the green or quad of a college, you would meet your friends, their friends, talk about what you were up to, and make plans. OWS wants you to come over and hang out and talk about that thing we read. It wants to smoke weed and watch the cars drive by. It wants to eat pizza. And it wants to do so in a way that doesn't make anyone feel bad. And while these are not necessarily rigorous impulses, they can be generative, as we have seen

How has the movement proceeded without its campus? It is hard to say. Like most schools these days, OWS is plagued by endowment woes, not so much because we are running out of money as because we have so much and we are eager to listen to what everyone has to say about what to do with it. This is scary. Sometimes it seems like, if there was no money, there would be no movement. After all, so much of meetings now involve arguing about the merits of some or other expense. Then other times it seems like if there was no money, we could finally get important stuff done. Thus the meetings drag on and on, even in the supposedly refined spokes council. The OWSers are patient, or try to be. In most cases, it seems like things get done even if the wider deliberative body's discussion was derailed.

There is a certain luxuriousness to this patience. It would be easy to read as the luxuriousness of the privileged, of people whose parents have enough money to keep them in low-stress, high-expectation pedagogical environments from birth 'til death. But I think it is also out of a desperation that this patient deliberative impulse comes. Anyone who has seen their peer grow impatient in a slow seminar, or been rebuffed by a university administrator knows that the world is not like the academy, that the relative ease of life the academy is a delusion. In the real world, people are excluded. Detractors are brushed off (and while some of us have certainly seen detractors brushed off at OWS, it does not come lightly). Thus, the internal world of OWS imagines itself as utopian. Especially without Zuccotti, the movement tries embrace itself.

If it's not clear already, I write about the traces of the collegiate in OWS with ambivalence because I find them both compelling and off-putting. College, in itself, is something to be ambivalent about: when we think of the failures of the academy, student debt immediately comes to mind, as well as the occlusion of the mentally ill, the homeless, and the other members of the true American lower classes from pristine University campuses. Further, we must acknowledge the people who work really hard in OWS who have not gone to college, won't go to college, don't really care about college (and who whom we ought not to exclude from our argument).

Collegiate OWSers have a lot of energy but are also tremendously impressionable. Their impressionability makes 'grown-ups' anxious, on the right and the left. I talked to a cop who said he was worried about young kids getting "converted" into believing in violent, anarchist tactics. A panel of older organizers were very concerned about the movement being "co-opted." But the OWSers impressionability is also preferable, in my mind, to the cool condescension of the seasoned activists and academics, who purport to know what the "kids" should or shouldn't do.

Many of the college tropes of OWS are not necessarily exclusive to college students though.

So while attempting to avoid shoulds or shouldn'ts, I will say that OWS now lacks a campus, but also has no university administration. Its organizers are

HISTORIES

ANN SNITOW

GREENHAM COMMON

This piece written in 1984 about the occupation of the U.S. cruise missile base at Greenham Common, England, is not meant as a direct model for Occupy Wall Street but as a reminder of an encouraging past. I have no doubt that the mass popular mobilizations of the 1980s, mostly in Europe, were an essential element in the collapse of Cold War militarism, though of course politicians continue to pretend otherwise, giving Reagan all

not vetted by search committees, its pedagogues don't undergo peer-review. What has been impressive about the movement is its ability to mobilize non-career leftists, to get, for example, average recent college grads, to come to rallies, and accordingly, generate a lot of media attention. But these things are not givens. As the media gets bored, the non-activists will feel less enthused (and will simply know less). College students, and especially college activists, have somewhat of a captive audience for their projects and actions. As many who have attended smaller protests and political events know, OWSers are not so blessed. So while the tendency of moderate OWSers to "tolerate" their more radical counterparts strikes me as somewhat relativist, it is also strategic. Without administrators to decisively adjudicate conflict, it's wiser, for stability's sake to avoid it. Furthermore, if the OCCUPY movement is to become (and sustain itself as) a mass movement in America, it will probably swallow a healthy dose of American anti-intellectualism (manifest often as an aversion to complexity). This will not necessarily disenfranchise the collegiate OCCUPYers because college does not do enough to protect us youngsters from American anti-intellectualism. Thus, we are likely to concede the points of various stripes of leftist, whether they are more or less radical, because a) we don't want to exclude anyone, b) arguments against such general concession will become too complex for our fledgling movement, and c) because such hedging will keep the movement as broad as possible. An undergrad-driven OWS has shown itself more inclined towards wide palatability as a strategy, rather than divisive scrutiny of positions. (Ironically, the oft-professorial ultra-left, with their academic investment in taxonomy and obscurity, have tended to be averse to any kind of wider palatability, preferring to instead scrutinize and reject).

If the impulse towards palatability and inclusion is ultimately a strength, it is in part because America (and the American media) really likes youth culture. Ray Kachel (a middle-aged OWSer who appeared in pieces by Keith Gessen and George Packer) is an OWS celebrity for the New Yorker crowd, but the rest of the country is more excited about zanier, younger OCCUPYers, like Ketchup. If the inherent appeal of the younger set will sustain the attention of the media without sabotaging the movement entirely (people on the Internet like to talk shit about Ketchup) the moderates and fence-sitters will keep coming out. And the kids will stay in the spotlight, and stay excited. We hope. In this early stage, it seems like size and momentum are twinned, so we can work towards one and count on the other. This may not sustain the movement into old age, but hopefully it will at least get us through this early phase of our education.

The college experience is often defined in opposition to the quote-unquote real world. College students are told they live in a bubble, that they are having the best years of their lives. Yet it's also true, as a friend pointed out to me, that college students often seem like they are waiting around for something to happen to them. OWSers, no matter how fresh from college they are, seem to be a little bit cannier than this. The media attention has made the movement seem real, but so has the violence of the police, the support of the unions, the palpability of economic inequality in the so-called Land of the Free. The college experience, no matter how much gear you buy from the campus bookstore, can never belong entirely to the students. College is administrated, mediated, and polished for the sake of organization and profit. OWS can belong to us, and thus can be as complicated and authentic as we allow it to be. If we claim it, OWS can be the real world.

the credit. A vast, international public, cowed by nuclear fear for decades, made a radical turn, refusing to continue passive support for the specious idea that nuclear arms are a source of security.

It's taken a long time—and the shameless and obscene greed of a few—to stir the many to outrage once again. But here we are, joining in what we hope will become a mass refusal.

How important was it that Greenham, however rural, sprawling and unmappable, was an ongoing symbolic place, able to inspire others all over the world to occupy spaces too? To make the inconvenient journey to Greenham Common was to participate, to protest. Was this physical, visible endurance central to Greenham's power? I and thousands of others visited, year after year, until the Cold War was over and the base was abandoned.

What does place mean now in our era of dematerialization, virtual closeness, speed of connection? I still see literal space as amazingly powerful and am ready to take a turn sitting in the drizzle at Zuccotti Park. But perhaps the Greenham model of a years-long protest in a fixed place is now approaching the impossible? We had fires when it got cold. Today, police techniques for surveillance and control are far more sophisticated and vicious, and the legal nets around public space have continually tightened in the so-called war against terror.

If we can't hold on to even a tiny tract of permanence, we'll simply have to find other forms of relentless presence. Anyway, Greenham was never meant to be static; the goal was always proliferation, rhizomic development. When you were there you would hear the chant "Greenham women are everywhere."

(At Christmas 1986, artist Susan Kleckner decided to bring Greenham to New York with her "Window Piece." A different woman camped in a storefront window on West Broadway each week for almost a year. Women's Peace encampments also cropped up in those years and lasted several days in Madison Square Park and Battery Park. I remember being on rat patrol, so others could sleep.)

Finally, a word about the expulsion of men from Greenham after the first nine months. Among other things, this move essentialized violence as male. With the men gone from the occupation, the map of violence could be unambiguous. Peaceful female demonstrators outside the base confronted a male death machine on the other side of the wire.

It would be a great misunderstanding of how much good work feminist and queer politics has done in the almost 30 years since Greenham to think that we can or should draw such a simple diagram of good and evil again. But the fact that Occupy Wall Street is meant to include everyone doesn't offer any closure to the gender drama. Many have experienced OWS as a largely male space. Some women feel like tokens, less heard, less likely to be insiders in making decisions. Others have experienced sexual harassment.

Because the kinetic OWS keeps changing its population, its mores, its structures, its locations, no generalization about sexism can hold. But, dear friends, "men" and "women," since we're not going to take the short cut of gender separation this time around, constant vigilance is in order. Sexism can be subtle. Sexism can seem normal. At Greenham, discussion of sexism and violence was unceasing, and these discussions should remain urgent for us now.

Whatever their differences, Greenham and OWS are alike in freeing political imagination, in setting loose an expressive, hopeful politics. No tents allowed on the ground? Let's hang them from helium balloons in the sky, as they did at Occupy Berkeley. Suddenly, the horizon is limitless.

—Ann Snitow December 10, 2011

I made my first trip to the women's peace encampment at Greenham Common last May partly to assure myself it was still there. After mass evictions in April, the press had announced with some glee that the continuous vigil at the U.S. cruise missile base was over at last. Certainly on my arrival in the freezing rain there seemed little enough evidence to contradict these reports.

When I reached the prosperous town of Newbury with a friend who had given me a lift from London, we couldn't at first find even the base, which our map said was a misshapen oval just outside the town. How could something nine miles around, bounded by a 10-foot fence, guarded by large contingents of the U.S. Air Force, the Royal Air Force, and the police be so quietly tucked away?

Finally a scrawled woman's symbol painted on the road gave us a clue. We went up to the plateau of land that was once "common" to all. And suddenly, the fence was right in front of us in the fog. The Greenham fence looks very serious—thick wire mesh topped by several feet of rolled barbed wire, all supported at frequent intervals by cement pylons. Ten feet farther inside are more rolls of barbed wire, forming a tangled second barrier rather like those on the battlefields of World War I. Inside the fence, we could just make out—through sheets of wire and rain—concrete runways, small bunkerlike buildings, a treeless wasteland. One structure, rather like a giant, half-buried two-car garage, was, as I learned later, a missile silo.

But there were no women. Here was a gate, certainly, one of the nine where the women live, and before it several little humps of plastic, but the only people on view were a few policemen. A mile farther along and, finally, two women, standing beneath a twisted umbrella that they seemed to be holding more over the struggling fire than themselves. Two smallish women in the rain. Impossible. In silent agreement we drove on to yet another gate with again a huddle of plastic, an extinguished fire, a forlorn dereliction. I finally understood: this was it. I asked to be dropped off back with those women with the umbrella and the fire. (You can't imagine what a depressing idea this was.) We drove back. I struggled into the waterproof boots my friend had lent me—absolute necessities as I soon discovered—and joined the women.

They were Donna and Maria. They were very, very wet. Maria's face was hidden under her sodden hood, though one could just manage to see she had a bad cold. Donna wished the world to know she was "fed up." Neither was interested in talking much. They seemed faintly aroused to hear that I had just come from New York, but as the day progressed I came to understand their lack of surprise. We stood there in the stinking nowhere and people stopped by in cars, visiting us from all over the world. If Greenham feels like the world's end, it is also a mecca, a shrine of the international peace movement.

Inventive, leaderless, a constantly rotating population of women have blocked the smooth functioning of this cruise missile base for three years now. In the great traditions of pacifism, anarchy, and English doggedness in adversity, they have entered the base, blockaded its gates, danced on its missile silos, made a mockery of its security systems, and inspired other people to set up peace camps elsewhere in Britain and all over the world—in Italy, for instance, and Australia, Japan and the United States.

The camps were empty that first day because some of the women were exhausted; some in jail; some in New York suing Ronald Reagan; some at the cruise missile base in Sicily, helping the beleaguered women's peace camp there; some in Holland for a big government vote on NATO. After a few hours, Donna, too, left with one of the circumnavigating cars, off to Reading for a bath and a drink. Maria and I stayed where we were, which proved to be Indigo Gate; (The women have named their homes for the colors of the rainbow.) Although most of the women were gone, the Greenham peace camp was not shut down: at each gate several women were sticking it out in the rain. In fact, you can't really shut Greenham, even if you drag all the women away from all the gates. They come back or they go home, explaining that it hardly matters: "Greenham women are everywhere."

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Back in 1981 when I first heard about the women's peace camp at Greenham Common, I was impressed but a little worried, too. Here was a stubborn little band of squatters obstructing business as usual at a huge military base. But the early media reports celebrated these women as orderly housewives and mothers who would never make this vulgar noise just for themselves but were naturally concerned about their children, innocent animals, and growing plants.

My feminist reaction was: not again. I had joined the women's liberation movement in 1970 to escape this very myth of the special altruism of women, our innate peacefulness, our handy patience for repetitive tasks, our peculiar endurance—no doubt perfect for sitting numbly in the Greenham mud, babies and arms outstretched, begging men to keep our children safe from nuclear war.

We feminists had argued back then that women's work had to be done by men, too: no more "women only" when it came to emotional generosity or trips to the launderette. We did form women-only groups—an autonomous women's movement—but this was to forge a necessary solidarity for resistance, not to cordon off a magic femaleness as distorted in its way as the old reverence for motherhood. Women have a long history of allowing their own goals to be eclipsed by others, and even feminist groups have often been subsumed by other movements. Given this suspiciously unselfish past, I was uneasy with women-only groups that did not concentrate on overcoming the specific oppression of women.

And why should demilitarization be women's special task? If there's one thing in this world that won't discriminate in men's favor, it's a nuclear explosion. Since the army is a dense locale of male symbols, actions, and forms of association, let men sit in the drizzle, I thought; let them worry about the children for a change.

But even before going to Greenham I should have known better than to have trusted its media image. If the women were such nice little home birds, what were they doing out in the wild, balking at male authority, refusing to shut up or go back home? I've been to Greenham twice now in the effort to understand why many thousands of women have passed through the camps, why thousands are organized in support groups all over Britain and beyond, why thousands more can be roused to help in emergencies or show up for big actions.

What I discovered has stirred my political imagination more than any activism since that first, intense feminist surge 15 years ago. Though I still have many critical questions about Greenham, I see it as a rich source of fresh thinking about how to be joyously, effectively political in a conservative, dangerous time. Obviously this intense conversion experience is going to take some explaining.

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When, in the summer of 1981, a small group of women from Cardiff in Wales decided to use their holidays to take a long walk for peace, they could choose from a startlingly large number of possible destinations. Unobtrusive, varying in size and purpose, more than 100 U.S. military facilities are tucked away in the English countryside, an embarrassment of military sites available for political pilgrimage.

One U.S. base distinguished itself as particularly dreadful. Enormous, centrally located, but quietly carrying on incognito, the site was Greenham Common, outside the town of Newbury, where the U.S. Air Force was then preparing for 96 ground-launched cruise missiles to be deployed in the fall of 1983. To protest this new step in the arms race, the Welsh women set out to walk 120 miles due east to Newbury, only 60 miles out from London. They were a varied bunch, mostly strangers to each other—36 women from very different class and political backgrounds, four men in support, and a few children. Their nine-day walk, which was ignored by the press, filled them with excitement and energy, and they were greeted warmly in the towns along the way.

By the time they reached Greenham, however, the media silence had become galling. Four women decided to chain themselves to the main gate of the base to force the world to take notice. This act of protest has had children and grandchildren undreamed of by the original, quite humble, and politically inexperienced Greenham marchers. Teachers, farmers, nurses, and—yes—housewives, they had had no intention of staying at Greenham. But first the media took their time; then tents had to be set up and people informed. A few days spent in support of the chained women lengthened to a week, then two. Some campers had to leave, but others were just arriving.

The summer days began to give way to the chill damp of English winter. Per haps it felt callow to give up protesting against nuclear disaster just because the afternoons were drawing in. Gradually, as the peace camp persisted—a small cluster of tents and caravans at the main gate of the base—one fact became plain: Greenham was tapping a great, hidden energy source for protest. There were enough women who were willing to give bits of time stolen from the work-that-is-never-done to keep a campfire perpetually burning on Greenham Common.

After initial amusement and tolerance, the missile base took alarm. Winter came but the women did not go away. On January 20, 1982, the nearby town of Newbury served notice on the camps of its intention to evict.

If ever the women had considered packing it in, this evidence that they were a real thorn in the side of the American military and its English support systems must have clinched matters. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher told the world the women were irresponsible; she didn't like them one bit. The women began telling reporters, "We're here for as long as it takes"—the "it" left menacingly unspecified. Some may have meant only the local rejection of U.S. cruise missiles. But by this time even the opposition Labour party was beginning to consider the far more ambitious goal of unilateral disarmament as a serious English option.

The long-threatened eviction didn't come until late May 1982, when the camp was nine months old. By this time the women's community was firmly entrenched. Individual women came and went, but the camp endured. The shifting population made even honest generalizations about the women difficult, while the press had long ended its romance with docile housewives and now made more insulting efforts to stereotype them (just middle-class ladies, just lesbians, just green-haired punks). The women themselves refused self-definition, other than to say that they were unified by their double commitment—to nonviolence and to direct action. Since they eschewed leaders as well as generalizations, there was no spokesperson to mediate between the world and the spontaneous acts of the group.

It is no doubt this very amorphousness that has made evicting the women so difficult. The police are taught to arrest the ringleader, but here there is none. Campers evicted from the Common land simply cross over to Ministry of Transport land, a strip

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alongside the road, or to Ministry of Defense Land. Evicted from there, they move back to council land. Constant evictions—sometimes daily—have become a central, shaping reality of Greenham life. Since no location there is legal, even the smallest acts of persistence acquire special symbolic weight. For anyone, just visiting Greenham Common, sitting down on an overturned bucket at a campfire for a chat and tea, is an act of civil disobedience.

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During my first visit, a two-day stay, I assumed that it was with grisly irony that the women had named the gates the colors of the rain bow. My time at Indigo was absurdly bleak and monochromatic. We struggled to keep the fire going; Maria (who, it turned out, was from Spain) performed a vegetarian miracle on a tiny, precariously tilted grill; we talked to the guards five feet from us on the other side of the fence about war, peace, men, women, weather, money; we slept in an ingenious but soaking handmade teepee, while outside an ever changing pair of guards patrolled with growling dogs under giant arc lamps which sizzled in the rain and lit up our dreams.

Greenham seemed mainly a passive test of endurance, though it was obvious, too, that instead of destroying the encampment, the stream of evictions has become a source of solidarity, resistance, and imagination. Where once gardens were planned, now a few flowers grow in a pram, easily rolled away at a moment's notice. Where once elaborate circus tents were pitched, now a cup on a stick holds up a makeshift roof. Those unprepossessing huddles of plastic I saw on my arrival were actually full of women, sheltering from the rain. These "benders" can look squashed and ugly from outside; but the bent branches that support the plastic are often still covered with leaves making the inside a bower. When the bailiffs come with their big "chompers," they get a pile of soggy polyethylene, while the campers carry their few possessions across the road to safety. As soon as the bulldozers are gone, up go the plastic shelters once more.

Familiar domestic collages of blackened tea kettles, candles, corn flakes, bent spoons, chipped plates (never paper ones) lie around as if the contents of a house had been emptied into the mud, but here the house itself is gone. The women have left privacy and home, and now whatever acts of housekeeping they perform are in the most public of spaces up against the fence or road. Greenham is the ultimate housewife's nightmare: the space that can never be swept clean, ordered, sealed off, or safe. But as the mud blackens hands and the wood smoke permeates clothes and hair, the women of Greenham give up gracefully. (With thick irony I was offered the following suggestions: "Wood smoke is a pretty good deodorant." "Try washing the dishes in boiling water; it loosens things up a bit, under the fingernails.")

The evictions have further clarified the situation: this is life in extremis, life carried on where authority and custom do not mean it to be lived. There is only one source of water for all the camps. Only small and portable Robinson Crusoe contrivances have a chance. Greenham shreds the illusion of permanence and pushes those who live there into a naked, urgent present.

It is hard to imagine a better intellectual forcing ground for people struggling to grasp the full reality of the nuclear threat. Sitting at the fire, we discussed postindustrial society, postimperialist England, whether or not one should eat meat, the boundary between useful and irresponsible technical advances. Strewed around us were mixtures of very old technologies (how to make a fire with nothing but damp wood; how to cook everything on that fire—there is no electricity anywhere in the camps; how to build a shelter from bracken) and useful new ones (plastic protects everything; some women have fancy Gore-Tex sleeping bags or jackets because, though waterproof, they "breathe").

I told one woman who has lived at Greenham for two years that sometimes the camps looked to me as if World War III had already happened, as if we were rehearsing for life after the bomb, in a flat landscape where there will probably be plenty of bits of plastic and Velcro but no clean water, no electricity, nowhere to hide. She looked at me pityingly: "Greenham is a holiday camp next to what things would be like if these bombs go off." Of course, of course. Still, Greenham is a grim reminder of how much effort the simplest acts of maintenance take once one has removed oneself from the house, the town, the city. People there are experimenting with self-governance in small communities; they are living with less, seeking new definitions of comfort and satisfaction.

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Certainly that less is more seemed the message of my first visit. But on my second, Greenham revealed a whole new side, a dramatic richness. I arrived my second time in delicate sunlight for an action called "10 million women for 10 days" timed to coincide with last September's vast NATO maneuvers on the East German-West German border. This time instead of a wasteland I found a carnival, a caldron of direct action, a wildly kinetic place. Circus tents were going up for the ten-day gathering and caravans offered free food. Strings of colorfully dressed women lined the road, walking clockwise and counterclockwise, in the great Greenham round. They had come to act.

Part of what makes the daily exhaustion of Greenham endurable for so many different kinds of women—and in such large numbers—is that contrary to first appearances, the place is a magnificent, exotic stage set for effective political gestures. Unlike the political demonstrations I have known, peace camps are permanent frames that can give form to hundreds of individual acts of resistance. Energy flows like light because of the immediacy of everything, the constant, imminent possibility for self-expression and group solidarity.

You are not only joining something larger than yourself but something that is continuously, inexorably taking its stand of militant witness and rebuke, even while you're sleeping, even when you're fed up and go off to spend a night in town, even when you're angry, confused, or at political loggerheads with every other woman in the place. Greenham is a springboard from which actions that would usually take months of laborious planning can be dreamed discussed, and performed between night and morning.

Ideas for Greenham action can come from anywhere—something read in the paper, an image someone shares at the fire—and one such action made Greenham internationally famous, the "embrace the base" demonstration of December 12, 1982. The precipitating image—borrowed from the U.S. Women's Pentagon Action—was of women encircling

the fence, surrounding it with feelings of power and love. No one knew if enough women would come to stretch around the nine-mile perimeter, so the nervous few who had set the idea in motion told everyone to bring long scarves to use as connectors, just in case. Somewhere between 30,000 and 50,000 came, more than enough to embrace the entire round. (Whatever the press says, the women are always uncountable: Greenham has no center, no check-in point, no higher ground for surveying the scene. It is forced—by geography and police—to be scattered; it is elusive and invertebrate by choice.) The women festooned every inch of fence with symbols, paint, messages. To those who were there and the millions more who heard about it, the action seemed a miracle. The next day, 2,000 women blockaded the base, and, two weeks later, on New Year's dawn, 44 climbed the fence and began an hour's dance on the half-completed missile silos.

On the anniversary of "embrace the base" the women tried another, more hostile image of encirclement. Again 50,000 came, this time with mirrors they held up to the fence, reflecting its own dreary reality back on itself. At yet another carefully planned action, the women locked the soldiers inside the base by securing all the gates with heavy-duty bicycle locks. The increasingly frantic soldiers couldn't cut their way out and, finally, had to push one of their own gates down.

But it is a distortion of Greenham activism to mention only these large and well-known events, which required an unusual amount of advance planning. In fact, nothing was more maddening for an old new leftist like me than the effort to figure out where a Greenham action comes from—rather like trying to find out how a drop of dye travels through a gallon of water. Women told me: Well, this one had this idea. And we all had a meeting. ("Who is this 'all?'" "Whoever wanted to do an action.") Then some of us didn't like it. And we kept talking about it. We changed it a bit. We agreed to ask all our friends and their friends, by phone, by chain letter. We have a big network.

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One of the brilliant structural inventions of the peace movement as a whole is its combination of small affinity groups with large networks. In the small group you are known, valued, listened to. These are the people you choose from the heart, the ones you want next to you if the police get rough. The small group feels like a place you can return to. But instead of being an isolated enclave, the affinity group is linked to others in an international network, which shares some if not all the small group's goals. The Greenham network includes men as well as women, organized in a number of forms, in ecology groups, local political groups, male support groups, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament groups. Most direct action at Greenham, though, is generated not from the larger network but within small affinity groups. An idea or image travels around the gates like wildfire. "Let's get up at 4:00 a.m. and shake a big stretch of fence down." "Let's have a vigil at the gate at sunset and call all the names of the people who wanted to be here but couldn't." "Let's confuse them by blockading the road a mile from the gate and creating such a traffic jam that they can't get to us to arrest us." Once, at Easter: "Let's dress up like furry animals and cover ourselves with honey, and break into the base." (No one arrested the women who did this one—maybe because they were too sticky?)

Or take the fence, that always present reminder of an "outside" versus "inside," a raggle-taggle band of colorful women who sing and dance and watch versus a gray-and-brown squad of soldiers who march and drill and watch. My first impression of this fence as something final and authoritative left me entirely unprepared for the women's view of it: they have simply rejected it as a legitimate boundary. Slipping under or cutting doors through the wire, they enter the base constantly, exploring, painting, filching frighteningly bureaucratic memos about nuclear war—symbolically undermining the concept "security." Hundreds have been arrested for criminal damage to the wire, yet women continue to enter the base routinely, in large numbers.

It is startling to learn just how much can be done by the carefully nonviolent who are also determined and militant and bent on obstruction. One demonstration called for women with bolt cutters (heavy wire clippers to surround the fence and take the whole thing down. Thousands removed miles and miles of wire. Of course the fence is constantly repaired, shored up, rebuilt, but at any time or place you can come on a group working together rhythmically, like rowers, to shake it down again. Police rush over; the women rush away, laughing or ululating or singing, only to return the minute the coast is clear. Nine miles is a long front of vulnerability, and the police look and probably feel like fools as they sprint here and there, defending their barrier from women who never offer them much resistance, but never desist.

In one exceptional foray inside the base, a symbolic gesture became a literal obstruction when a camper painted a peace symbol on the convenient fuselage of what turned out to be the top-secret "Blackbird" spy plane. Her paint ruined its fabulously expensive titanium shield, but she was brought up on a minor charge—no doubt to avoid discussion in court about how vulnerable high technology is to sabotage and how easily women evade the authority of the base.

By now the fence can be quite beautiful, with its layers of history, its dense record of rival intentions. There isn't a yard that isn't cut, mended, woven with webs or dragons or God's eyes, painted, hung with objects like teething rings, pine cones, a pair of shoes, decorated with postcards, photographs ("Libby and her dog Zach, Seattle, WA"), pinned with messages: "To Lucy T. and all wimmin," or "Keep Britain tidy—remove cruise"; and once, to my shock, "To my dear son David, age 24, who gave his life in the miners' strike, 1984." Now the fence simply belongs to the women. They have taken it over.

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By crude measurements—for example, polls—Greenham has made little statistical difference in how the English think about the nuclear threat. About half oppose the deployment of cruise missiles; a third approve; a sixth have no opinion—statistics that have remained fairly constant since 1981. All the same, the loose entity "Greenham" is suspiciously controversial—loved, romanticized, hated, and scorned—precisely because it is capable of generating political experiences that are threatening, profound, and transformative.

Conservatives try to reassure themselves that the only women influenced are those already beyond the pale, the hags, the dykes, the freeloaders. What is continuously

disconcerting to these observers is how this imagery half fits and half doesn't: women who look "ordinary" in some respects suddenly make radical breaks with things as they are. They are housewife-witches or mother-lesbians who insist on walking the cracks of standard female identities.

Because they've agreed to differ among themselves, to act independently or in small bunches without having to get everyone's approval, difference is casually celebrated at Greenham, a live-and-let-live attitude that leaves a vacuum others rush to fill with generalizations and definitions. The women love to parody the contradictions that arise. They sing:

We're mostly vegetarian
Except when we're devouring
men.

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Although the Greenham encampment was initiated by women, for the first months several men did live there. In February 1982 the women met separately and decided to ask these men to leave. Nothing in Greenham's history has caused as much furor and debate as this decision.

Why did the women ask the men to go? At Greenham one gets a variety of answers to this question. Some women say the first evictions were coming and they feared that the police would be more brutal if men were among the campers, and that the male campers themselves might respond with violence in defense of "their women." Others say that the women noticed the old divisions of labor creeping in. As one camper I interviewed had heard the story: "The men were beginning to take over the meetings but not pulling their weight as far as the chores were concerned." The women feared, too, that insofar as their resistance was militant and effective, the press would assume that this power came from the few men in the camp. Once more, women's acts would be invisible.

The Greenham women I talked to take great pains to point out that the purpose of Greenham is not to exclude men but to include women—at last. Though a few women there might still tell you women are biologically more peaceful than men, this view has been mostly replaced by a far more complex analysis of why women need to break with our old, private complicity with public male violence. No one at Greenham seems to be arguing that the always evolving Greenham value system is inevitably female. The women recognize their continuity with the Quakers, with Gandhi, with the entire pacifist tradition, and with the anarchist critique of the state. At the same time, women, the Greenham campers believe, may have a separate statement to make about violence because we have our own specific history in relation to it.

They also reject the structures or assumptions they are likely to find in mixed groups—where they feel their energies deadened. Greenham is more openended. Eclectic and pragmatic, the women are thinking on their feet.

A fast-flowing stream of ideas floods back from Greenham toward home, transforming the movements to which the women return on different terms. These other groups get flushed with some of the excitement of Greenham's creative pace. A CND activist told me that CND takes a year to change a policy, while at Greenham political ideas can get superseded by others through intense debate in a matter of days.

Greenham is now shorthand for a large complex of activities all over Britain and Europe, where other peace camps have been set up or where groups have formed in support. Though it is sometimes accused of being odd, isolated, and incommunicable, and though there's no hard evidence that it has changed mainstream politics, Greenhamness has made a difference in the diffuse style typical of all its works and days.

A whole activist generation is being forged at Greenham, not of age but of shared experience. These women are disobedient, disloyal to civilization, experienced in taking direct action, advanced in their ability to make a wide range of political connections. The movable hearth is their schoolroom, where they piece together a stunning if raffish political patchwork.

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Before visiting Greenham, I had feared that its politics would prove simple-minded, that those absolutes, life and death, would have cast more complex social questions in the shade. How, for instance, could the old question "What do women want?" survive when the subject is Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD, U.S. military slang for nuclear deterrence). As Brenda Whisker wrote in *Breaching the Peace*, an English collection of feminist essays criticizing the women's peace movement, "I think that stopping the holocaust is easier than liberating women." Hard words certainly, but understandable, solidified through bitter experience. While women and children are first, feminism continues to be last.

Elements of the Greenham intellectual environment feed such worries, but by the time I got to Greenham, a number of the radical feminist concerns in *Breaching the Peace* were already dated; Greenham consciousness had absorbed the critique and moved on. Certainly many women do come to Greenham with no thought of feminism, speaking instead of quite other concerns—of God, of nature, of their grandchildren. Many come who would never have joined feminist groups, precisely because feminism seemed "selfish," aggressively women-only, threatening to a treasured, familiar female identity.

But once those women come to Greenham, a great deal happens to them there. During my two visits, I felt a rising bubble of excitement. The place is about gender; male and female are both forced by circumstances to caricature themselves. Greenham is a feminist laboratory. The experimental compounds may not be pure, but the mixed results are endlessly suggestive for any one interested in how gender works, and in how women can change male power without seeking that power.

Some gender parables: The scene is a night at Green Gate. I am with Nesta King of the Women's Pentagon Action and with Janey Martin, a woman of 19 who has been to Greenham a number of times and has cleverly helped us build our bender.

The general action this particular night seems to be fence shaking. Hundreds of women are gathered under the powerful lights, shaking, keening, singing, talking, strolling up and down the perimeter, which is very close to the silos just at this point. Suddenly the police, who are usually very careful to pretend that this is all just female nonsense and no one on the base is very worried, lose their tempers. They form a line and walk us all steadily back from the fence. Somehow Janey, who is small and blond and delicate, doesn't move back fast enough. A policeman under less control than most, a very tall, hefty man who obviously feels like a lion taunted by mice, gives tiny Janey a sharp, mean push. She falls, frightened and startled, and—very much against her own political wishes in tranquility—springs up and gives him an angry push back. Useless, of course: he only gives her another fierce shove.

To my utter amazement, out of my mouth comes, very loudly: "Look, everyone, a huge man pushed little Janey. Aren't you ashamed, a big man like you?" Is this what's lurking in my mind? I'm horrified to encounter remnants of this very old story inside my feminist self. Do I really want to repeat that only a sissy pushes a girl, that girls aren't worth pushing, that it's only humiliating to shove them, no contest? Do I want to waste my political time trying to make men ashamed?

I did want to show up brute force as cruel, irresponsible, and finally useless, but the old gender exchange there at the fence was bound to obscure this more radical intention. Who was I—this outraged female, this moral mother hen? After all, what did I think we were doing? In spite of the singing, we meant business. We meant to criticize pushing



"LIFE UNDER OCCUPATION" ILLUSTRATION BY JOE ALTERIO

people, to restrain ourselves from pushing back, but not to ask for the old forms of female quarter.

I wonder if women are having to learn at Greenham—with a difference—what men learn too early and carry too far: the courage to dare, to test reaction, to define oneself against others. Nonviolent direct action takes great courage. The big men on their horses or machines are doing as ordered—which is comfortable for them. In contrast, it can be truly terrifying to refuse to do what an angry, pushing policeman tells you to do. For women particularly, such acts are fresh and new and this cutting across the grain of feminine socialization is a favorite, daring sport of the young at the fence. Such initiations give women a revolutionary taste of conflict, lived out fully, in our own persons, with gender no longer a reliable determinant of the rules.

Certainly it is no use for women to turn self-righteous—claiming a higher moral ground than men. On that ground we are admired but ignored. As Dorothy Dinnerstein has argued in *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*, emotional women have traditionally been treated like court jesters that the king keeps around to express his own anxieties—and thus vent them harmlessly. A woman's body lying down in a road in front of a missile launcher has a very different symbolic resonance for everyone from that of a male body in the same position. Greenham's radical feminist critics wonder just what kind of peace a female lying down can bring. Won't men simply allow women to lie in the mud forever because the demonstrators themselves only underline men's concept of what is female (passivity, protest, peace) and what is male (aggression, action, war)?

Before I came to Greenham, I shared these worries. But at Greenham at its best, women's nonviolent direct action becomes not another face of female passivity but a difficult political practice with its own unique discipline. The trick—a hard one—is to skew the dynamics of the old male-female relationships toward new meanings, to interrupt the old conversation between overconfident kings and hysterical, powerless jesters. This will surely include an acknowledgment of our past complicity with men and war making and a dramatization of our new refusal to aid and assist. (I think of a delicious young woman I heard singing out to a group of also very young soldiers: "We don't find you sexy anymore, you know, with your little musket, fife, and drum.")

Perhaps some of the new meanings we need will be found buried in the old ones. If women feel powerless, we can try to share this feeling, to make individual men see that they, too, are relatively powerless in the face of a wildly escalating arms race. Naturally, this is a message men resist, but the women at Greenham are endlessly clever at dramatizing how the army shares their impotence: The army cannot prevent them from getting inside the fence or shaking it down. It cannot prevent them from blockading the gates. It cannot prevent them from returning after each eviction.

Or, rather, it could prevent all this, but only by becoming a visibly brutal force, and this would be another kind of defeat, since the British armed services and police want to maintain their image of patriarchal protectors; they do not want to appear to be batterers of nonviolent women. Greenham women expose the contradictions of gender: by being women they dramatize powerlessness but they also disarm the powerful.

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As I write, the Greenham network keeps changing, usually beyond the range of media reports. This very week the death of Greenham was announced once more, but when I called friends they only laughed. "Of course the women are still there." The water situation is desperate and benders have given way to still more primitive plastic shelters, but everyone is "quite cheery."

When I describe Greenham women, I often get the reaction that they sound like mad idealists detached from a reality principle about what can and cannot be done, and how. In a sense this is true. The women reject power and refuse to study it, at least on its own terms. But the other charge—that they are utopian dreamers who sit around and think about the end of the world while not really living in this one—is far from the mark. In a piece in the *Times Literary Supplement* last summer, "Why the Peace Movement is Wrong," the Russian émigré poet Joseph Brodsky charged the peace movement with being a bunch of millenarians waiting for the apocalypse. Certainly there are fascinating parallels between the thinking of the peace women and that of the radical millenarian Protestant sects of the 17th century. Both believe that the soul is the only court that matters, the self the only guide, and that paradise is a humble and realizable goal in England's green and pleasant land. The millenarians offered free food just like the caravans now on the Common: Food, says one sign. Eat till You're Full.

But the women are not sitting in the mud waiting for the end, nor are they—as Brodsky and many others claim—trying to come to terms with their own deaths by imagining that soon the whole world will die. On the contrary, the women make up one of the really active millenarian forces around. President Reagan has told fundamentalist groups that the last trump ending human history might blow at any time now; the women believe that the dreadful sound can be avoided, if only we will stop believing in it.

Greenham women see a kind of fatalism all around them. They, too, have imagined the end, and their own deaths, and have decided that they prefer to die without taking the world with them. Nothing makes them more furious than the apathy in the town of Newbury, where they are often told, "Look, you've got to die anyway. So what difference does it make how you go?" These are the real millenarians, blithely accepting that the end is near. In contrast, the women look very hardheaded, very pragmatic. They see a big war machine, the biggest the world has known; and, rather than sitting in the cannon's mouth hypnotized, catatonic with fear or denial, they are trying to back away from the danger, step by step. They refuse to be awed or silenced by the war machine. Instead they say calmly that what was built by human beings can be dismantled by them, too. Their logic, clarity, and independence are endlessly refreshing. Where is it written, they ask, that we must destroy ourselves?

L. A. KAUFFMAN

After the Action:

Reflections on the Global Justice Movement

It must have been around September 17 that I glanced up at the protest poster hanging over my desk and felt my jaw drop.

This was not September 17, 2011, the beautiful and hopeful day of Occupy Wall Street's public debut, and the poster was not of a ballerina poised on a bull. It was ten years earlier, on a day when the air in my Manhattan apartment smelled of fire and death, when every lamppost outside was plastered with images of missing people who would never be found, when the whole world was struggling to comprehend what the startling attacks of 9/11 might mean.

The poster over my desk came from the April 2001 Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) summit protest in Quebec City, one of a series of large mobilizations against corporate globalization organized in the wake of the 1999 World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle. Under the banner "Carnival Against Capitalism," the poster showed, of all things, a tall, square tower surrounded by flames and beginning to collapse. The image was drawn from the Tarot, and no doubt not intended literally. But gazing up at it as I was breathing in the ash from two towering symbols of corporate globalization, now reduced to smoldering rubble, left me feeling sick. Had our movement really been that dumb?

The global justice movement — so inspiring and innovative for a time, and based on a sweeping critique of how global trade agreements were undermining democracy, worker's rights, and the environment — faded quickly after September 11. A planned mass mobilization for late September 2001 against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund was called off, and the handful of sizable street actions against corporate globalization that took place in the ensuing years were dispiriting affairs, notable mainly for police repression.

The shift in public mood after 9/11 had much to do with this rapid decline — more, probably, than any internal movement weakness. Grief and fear dampened spirits. Everywhere were exhortations to national unity, with the clear implication that dissent was unpatriotic. With war first looming and then raging against Afghanistan, the issues of trade and democracy that had animated the global justice movement lost their sense of immediacy.

But the movement against corporate globalization waned for other reasons, too. It had gotten locked into a single model of protest, had come to take itself too seriously and too literally, and had lost the sense of how much a movement's prospects depend on how it portrays itself to the wider world. All of this made it easier for the police to contain and neutralize through simple force.

From the beginning, the global justice movement was drawn to the notion of disrupting business as usual through direct action. The images that have endured from the Seattle WTO are of tear-gas-wielding cops and roving Black Bloc anarchists. But the more striking thing about the demonstration for those who were there was something else: It actually worked.

The plan was to prevent the delegates to the World Trade Organization from meeting through a nonviolent body blockade. Early on the morning

PHILOSOPHIES & FUTURES

Stephen Squibb

Neo Autonomia

About two weeks before Occupy Boston was evicted, I called a friend for advice on how to get a proposal through our GA, which seemed to be growing both more antagonistic and more tedious. The proposal was about a potential move indoors—although we had no serious plans to move or concrete leads as to where we might go. She admonished me, saying something to the effect of:

Americans have a strong propensity to turn GA into a decision-making body, stretching the consensus process past the point of endurance. But what GA really wants is to be a place for conversation, where ideas are developed in common—more Quaker meeting than Town Hall. Out of this implicit understanding, smaller groups then make consensus decisions to pursue autonomous actions as needed, when opportunities present themselves. Instead of appearing at GA with a proposal in hand, go and ask questions like ‘What would it mean for this community to be indoors? What parts of camp would we want to take with us? How would things change?’ If this conversation is

of November 30, 1999, the mass of protesters completely surrounded the Seattle convention center and occupied key intersections in the vicinity. Linking arms, they peacefully but emphatically kept the delegates from entering. They literally shut the meeting down.

It was this nonviolent shutdown, in fact, that led the police to begin tear-gassing. (The Black Bloc property destruction began later, in a slightly different location, with little initial interference from police; the violent police tactics became linked to, and justified by, it only through subsequent media montage.)

It was, of course, amazing and electrifying to actually bring the WTO meeting to a halt. The Seattle WTO blockade had stopped “the operation of the machine,” to borrow from Mario Savio’s famous 1964 speech on direct action — only for a day, of course, but in a way that contributed to the collapse of official trade negotiations there and that could be claimed as a major movement victory.

So activists set out to do the same thing again — and again, and again. Protesting corporate globalization came largely to mean surrounding summit meetings, and a disproportionate share of activists’ energies were channeled into the minutiae of street tactics.

The large April 2000 mobilization against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Washington, D.C. was focused single-mindedly on shutting it down; when the blockade encircling the meeting was less than complete and delegates got through, there was a sense of disappointment, as if preventing delegates from entering were the most important measure of the movement’s success.

open and honest, the details of how and when to move can then be decided autonomously.

I considered how this would play out: Boston’s GA was typically divided into Working Group Proposals and Announcements and Individual Proposals and Announcements— there was no place for questions. When people had proposed discussion, they never asked for more than ten minutes, and they almost never got them. Instead, this chorus was universal: Form a working group! Work on this! Bring your work back so that we can do the work of deciding! “Work,” in typical American determined almost every aspect of the Occupation.

My friend identifies as an Autonomist, which as an affiliation refers most directly to the *Autonomia Operaia* militants of the 1977 Italian movement. This was a movement defined by its unwillingness to be mediated by any political party; its broad class composition (the unorganized and unemployed struggled alongside unionized labor); and its refusal of work—that is, the refusal to see work as man’s highest end, thereby breaking with Socialists and their homilies about the “dignity” of labor. It was perhaps the most virulent strain of left-wing thought to emerge from 1960s *operaismo* (literally, “workerism”) which had argued for the autonomous capacity of the shop floor worker to engage in revolt, without the mediation of bureaucratic unions and official left-wing parties.

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The movement seemed still to be growing, though, and growing bolder. Many of us felt like we were winning, that the momentum was on our side. Large European protests against the IMF and World Bank in Prague in September 2000 heightened the sense that the movement was locked in a literal battle with the forces of corporate globalization, and that activists’ job was to physically put their bodies on the line to stop destructive trade agreements.

And so Quebec City—the anti-FTAA mobilization of April 2001—became one big street fight. We had joy and exuberance and spirit on our side, but our songs and street dances and papier mache puppets were no match for the ten-foot-high fence the authorities built to keep us away or the weapons—concussion grenades, 10,000 volt tasers, rubber bullets, and thousands of tear-gas canisters—used to contain the crowd. The violence made what we were doing feel important; feeling vindicated, we couldn’t perceive how off-putting it all looked from the outside.

And of course once we lost the element of surprise — the factor that made the WTO shutdown possible — we could never again actually prevent a summit meeting from happening. And even if we had, that in turn wouldn’t mean we had actually disrupted the forward progress of

Autonomy as a mass movement came out of the “Historic Compromise” of the Italian Communist Party and the Christian Democrats in the early 1970s. Much like the debt ceiling “compromise” this this year, it was not much of a compromise at all, and asymmetry justified by assurances that it would restore stability actually had the opposite effect. As Franco “Bifo” Berardi writes, “Rather than being resolved, the institutional crisis in Italy assumed an increasingly dramatic character.... The basic reason for the crisis was the growing distance between representative political institutions and a population of hopeless young people.” By February of 1976, this distance had grown so great that Luciano Lama, one of the most important left leaders in Italy, could be rudely expelled from the occupation at the University of Rome Sapienza. *Semiotext(e)* published an eyewitness account of the incident in 1980 that is worth quoting at some length.

It was the morning of Thursday, February 17, 1977. The university had been occupied for over a week by students, the unemployed, the comrades.... The white façade of the Faculty of Letters was covered with slogans and writings. One warned the capitalists and the revisionists that they would be “buried in a burst of laughter.” This was the work of the Metropolitan Indians, a non-organized cultural movement of young comrades, who turned their biting wit and sarcasm on the Government, the Communist Party and even on revolutionary “leader-figures”

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who tried to assert their dominance over the mass. The quality of this new revolutionary movement was, in fact, that the mass refused to be led in the traditional style, from above. It was, to a great extent, self-directing and self-organizing.

During the days and nights of the occupation, the entire University seemed to be a continuous people's party and people's forum. There were continuing and endless debates in the various commissions (the counter-information commission, the factory-and-community commission, the women's commission). There were also the (often stormy) general assemblies, where the Movement decided its policies....

[Lama] was accompanied at 9 AM by about 200 ICP heavies ... and about 2000 other representatives.... As he started to speak [the Metropolitan Indians] began chanting "Sacrifices, sacrifices, we want sacrifices!" (a parody of the State's economic policy upheld by the Communist Party). "We demand to work harder and earn less!"

The irony aggravated the humorless ICP heavies. About 10,000 students and comrades gathered. The Autonomists started to put on their masks."

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Autonomy was a clearer departure from business as usual in Europe than it has been in the US, with the Occupy movement; an indigenous kind of autonomism has been part of American politics for decades. The American working class has been accused of lacking class-consciousness, but its annual mass abstention from voting suggests at the least an awareness that it is not represented in electoral

politics. This is the significant difference between the European and American cases: here neither of the dominant parties has ever honestly claimed to represent the interests of the workers.. Occupy, like *autonomia*, emerged from the large gap between a political system that only represented a privileged minority and a fractured array of labor unions only able to represent a small fraction of workers.

What makes Autonomy such a useful example for the Occupy movement is that much of the Italian interest for autonomous organization came from historic struggles of American workers. As Christian Marrazzi put it in 1980, "There is nothing 'Italian' about class warfare in Italy. To understand Italy, one must understand the United States; one must rediscover in the history of American class warfare that political richness which today is attributed to Italian intellectuals." (The "Metropolitan Indians" mentioned above, who liked to imagine that, like Geronimo, they had gone "off reservation," reveal another aspect of this obsession with the US.)

Because they operated without the paternal guidance of social democratic parties, let alone the choke-hold of a Communist Party, the American labor movement was a "revolt against the very conditions of production itself," as C. L. R. James put it. In other words, while European workers' parties focused on meliorist truces between capital and labor, the American worker's freedom from the party meant that the radical wing of the labor movement focused on the lived experience of work itself. In this way, the American fixation on "work" in some respects became a source of radical

corporate globalization in any meaningful way. We were so filled with adrenaline from the extraordinary events that unfolded on the streets that we missed something crucial: Just because you leave a protest feeling exuberant about your experience there doesn't mean it was a success.

The Occupy movement has, on the whole, been more nimble than that, more willing to shift tactics and approaches to maintain public sympathy and sidestep dreary wars of position with the police. Mirth keeps a movement going; self-importance and sanctimony make it abrasive and clumsy. The great success of Occupy has been setting things in motion. It will win not because it sustains an encampment or shuts down a port or takes over a foreclosed home. These bold and inspiring actions are always, necessarily, temporary and symbolic. Their power lies outside them, in their potential to catalyze lasting change.

strength: because they worked as hard as they did under the "Fordism" their country pioneered, American radicals also thought deeply about work itself, and the nature of labor became more central to their strategy than that of their European counterparts.

Such thinking led to a radical internationalism, without parties—an autonomous international, deriving from an immensely captivating, purely literal interpretation of the phrase "workers of the world." This internationalism motivated idiosyncratic kinds

of organizing, such as that of the Wobblies, who brought unskilled, foreign-born, and minority workers into a union as part of their dream of creating "one big union" to cover the globe. This anti-vanguard position gained a clear articulation in James and Trotsky's 1938 debate on the "Negro Question." James had argued, against Trotsky, that far from needing to be led by the Communist Party, blacks would themselves advance the radical movement in America by fighting for their own rights on their own terms. James framed this

SARAH SCHULMAN

ACT-UP

Interviews with Larry Kramer and Gregg Bordowitz

From the ACT-UP Oral History Project
More at www.actuporalhistory.org

Sarah Schulman: How could you expect that [the gay community] would be able to meet the challenge of AIDS?

Larry Kramer: That's a great question. But I did and I still do and they still haven't.

We were dying and it happened first – so far as I could tell – through my people around me, my friends, our group. And you just think, Oh my God, we've got to save our lives, I guess. To this day, I don't understand. At its heyday, at its peak, ACT UP – how many did we have across the country? Ten thousand people maybe? With how many millions of gay people in this country? How did I expect it? I did.

SS: This is kind of tough question, but if you had never been involved in fighting for anybody else, where did you get the expectation that other people should come and make a stand for us?

LK: I guess I never thought of it that way. We needed help and you had to scream for it, and I asked for it nicely, originally. We tried to be very nice to *The New York Times* and to Ed Koch and you learn very fast that you're a faggot, and it doesn't make any difference that you went to Yale and were assistant to Presidents of film companies, and that you had money. You suddenly know what it's like to feel like a faggot or a nigger or a kike. I did. I have said that. And, I did. And I remember the day it happened. And I didn't like it.

SS: When did you first become aware of direct action?

LK: I think we all made it up as we went along. I don't know that we became aware of it. There are all these terminologies for these things now.

SS: Where did you first see people doing it?

LK: In the speech I made that night in the Center, I referred to this group of Catholics that went up to Albany – ten or twenty thousand of them – screaming at the legislature there and I said, why can't we do that?

SS: So you just started ACT UP, and then people brought that with them?

LK: I remember those meetings, when we would all sit around and talk. The first action – I don't remember how it got to be Wall Street. We were in the room. Were you there, then? I don't remember.

SS: No, not at the first meeting.

LK: We were in the room, and all right, what are we going to do? We knew we had to do something public because – because, because. I don't know, because of the Catholics had marched on Albany, I guess – because there wasn't anything else to do. How do you get attention? And somebody said, let's go against the FDA, because they were so slow in approving things. Mathilde said to me – Dr. Krim – the big heavy in all of this is Frank Young at the FDA. So I sat down, and I wrote an op-ed piece for the *Times* and they took it. It's called "The FDA's Callous Response to AIDS." Was it called AIDS? Yes, it was called AIDS. They took it, and it ran on the very day that we had the demo. So we were able to pass out at Wall Street these fliers. And I had gotten Joe Papp to make an effigy in the shop at the Public [Theater] of Frank Young, and we hung him in effigy down there on Wall Street. Where did it come from? I think it just came from all of us talking with each other all the time, I don't know.

independence in Hegelian terms in his 1948 “Notes on Dialectics”:

The coming of age of the proletariat means the abolition of the party. That is our new Universal stated in its baldest and most universal form.... The party as we have known it must disappear. It will disappear. It is disappearing. It will disappear as the state will disappear. The whole laboring population becomes the state. That is the disappearance of the state . . . It withers away by expanding to such a degree that it is transformed into its opposite. And the party does the same. The state withers away and the party withers away. But . . . the primary thing is the withering away of the party, for if it does not... the state never will.

The rejection of the party and the proliferation of revolutionary subjects both are clearly present in the Occupy movement. The refusal of work, however, is almost impossible to locate; the one belief that protesters and their antagonists seem to have in common is that everybody should have a job. Cries of “Get a Job!” are always met with “I have one (or two, or three)” or “I’m trying!” The absence of a

strong historical party formation has allowed American occupiers to embody the spirit of Autonomy while still preserving their attachment to labor.

The environmental question sets off the dogmatic nature of our belief in work; it’s not just that we might or ought to rethink the role of work; under the current conditions, we must do so. Given the continued industrialization of global agriculture, twenty million industrial farmers will soon replace the work of three billion people still living in peasant societies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The historical outlets for such mass redundancy have been migration or absorption into the urban economy, and both are environmentally and perhaps economically impossible today. The “new agricultural question”—What will we do when significantly fewer of us are required to produce what we need?—makes reconsidering the wage-earning or salaried consumer as the unit of the global economy an imminent necessity. Autonomy, which arose in a period of great environmental struggle in Europe and elsewhere, anticipates many of the insights

in environmental discourse over labor and production, though the challenges posed by climate change and the depletion of resources sharpen those insights, and make their implications more drastic.

If the content of the calls emanating from the occupations have been a cry for work rather than criticism of it, the initial form of the movement—local communes where one really could meditate in the morning, rally at noon, work the food tent in the evening, and study criticism after supper—tells a somewhat different story. In living together, differently, the occupiers struck, at the level of everyday life, against what Mario Tronti called the “social factory.” The space they created was,

and is, expansive; as James once claimed, it did not merely accept individuals’ differences but in fact was constituted from them. In a 1944 letter to Constance Webb, he translated this dialectic into a classically American idiom:

When the disciples asked Christ about the world to come and the places they were to get in it, he told them ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.’ They could not understand. They just couldn’t. The glory of life in our age is that this intense, individual, personal life can, in fact, must be lived in harmony with the great social forces that are now striving to carry humanity over the last barrier.

SS: So did you have anybody in your life who had AIDS until you came to the Wall Street action?

GB: I did not know anyone. As it turns out, I did. But they wouldn’t express symptoms or get sick until later.

SS: But did you know at the time?

GB: No. There is something else I wanted to say about the Wall Street action—the anger. I didn’t know quite how to deal with that kind of anger. Actually, I was upset that people were shouting, “You could get it, too.” I thought it was politically bad. I thought it would be politically alienating.

SS: Did you think it wasn’t true?

GB: I did think it was true. I haven’t thought about this in years. I’m just trying to tell everything here. So I just remember that it was my introduction to AIDS politics, and it was a kind of anger, and vibrancy, and honesty that I hadn’t encountered yet in other kinds of activism or protest.

Bordowitz and some other activists started a group they called “MHA,” which “stood for whatever we needed it to stand for.” Claiming they were the “Metropolitan Health Association,” they got a meeting with New York’s controversial health commissioner, Stephen Joseph, who had suggested internment for people with tuberculosis, and other repressive measures to halt the spread of AIDS. The members of MHA were arrested.

SS: How did ACT UP respond to you guys getting arrested?

GB: They were really into it. I remember going to the meeting. By this time, I was comfortable with being vocal. I stood up and said, “We did this,” and “Look, you can just do this. You don’t have to go to the large group to get authorization. In fact, it’s better that the large group is not involved with these kinds of actions because they don’t have to be held accountable. So you can just do stuff. ACT UP is just this place we all meet on a weekly basis to talk about strategy and prioritize issues.” I remember just saying over and over again, “You can just do this. Just go out and do this.” And people were very enthusiastic. They had seen—I think there was some small picture in the newspaper, and they had heard about it. I remember it being very exciting.

SS: Do you think that that contributed to the affinity group?

GB: Yes.

SS: Would you say that that happened right after, or consequently?

GB: I think it co-arose with that, but I think it certainly lent legitimacy to the notion of the affinity groups. Now we learned about affinity groups—you can’t underestimate the importance of the Hardwick decision and all the organizing that arose around that. Actually, my first arrest ever was on the Supreme Court steps in Washington at the March for Lesbian and Gay Rights. And as part of that civil disobedience, I went through a civil disobedience training that was run by Vicki Rovere of the War Resisters League. So the War Resisters League did training for the lesbian and gay rights organizations that were sponsoring the demonstration. This was 1986, right? So I went through those trainings and learned about affinity groups through the War Resisters League.

Larry Kramer

SS: This may be a bad memory, but I seem to remember one time you quit because you wanted ACT UP to have a President. Did I make that up?

LK: I think so.

SS: You didn’t bring in a proposal? I remember you got angry, because you wanted a certain kind of structure. You had a structure proposal for ACT UP.

LK: Structure is the wrong word. We were processing a lot of people after awhile, a lot of people – especially after we moved to Cooper Union. And to have to deal with that size of a room got to be distressing and boring for a lot of people, too. People were constantly looking for ways to make it all go smoother, and we used to have meetings about that – how can we make it go smoother? How can we get rid of the bullshit?

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Gregg Bordowitz

Gregg Bordowitz: We were these young gay artists who were interested in doing serious video work about the growing AIDS crisis. That’s when Hardwick hit. I remember David and I started doing work around Hardwick. We started showing up to the protests around Hardwick in the Village, with cameras, and we started documenting those. That was when I started identifying as gay, even though I was still living a kind of bisexual life. I decided that I was going to identify as gay, and be a part of the gay community, and make a contribution. And I started documenting the vibrant protests that arose around the Hardwick decision.

Sarah Schulman: Had you been tested at this point?

GB: No. And I wouldn’t test for two, three more years. I tested in 1988.

SS: So how did you get to ACT UP?

GB: David and I saw a poster at the Christopher Street subway stop for a protest at Wall Street. We said, “We’re gonna go there with cameras. That’s the next step. That’s what the Hardwick protests are leading us to. This is the most important issue that’s confronting the gay community.” ...

SS: So you got to Wall Street.

GB: We got to Wall Street. I met Jean Carlomusto there, who I would later collaborate with a great deal. The protest was amazing, and very moving, and scary. I remember I was concerned because a lot of people were chanting “You could get it, too.” So here we were, a small group by the church on Wall Street. I remember meeting Bradley Ball there, and a few other people. Everyone clustered together. The passers-by were just like quickly running by us. They didn’t want to have anything to do with us or what was going on. A few people would shout some epithets, or something like that. I don’t remember exactly what they shouted at us, but I remember at one point the entire crowd got into this chant of, “You could get it too, you could get it too.” I remember feeling very weird about that and not knowing how to deal with the emotions around me. I was new to AIDS activist politics. I had been doing other kinds of activism.

SS: Like what?

GB: I was involved with anti-interventionist—I was a member of CISPES. I was involved with protesting U.S. involvement in Guatemala and Nicaragua, and was part of the anti-interventionist in Central and Latin America movement, and was part of the group that shipped medical supplies to Sandinista hospitals on the Lower East Side. So I was very interested in doing activism, and always wanted to do something. I joined that group, the Sister Cities Project on the Lower East Side, to become more involved with my neighborhood—this white, Jewish kid from Long Island living in the East Village, a primarily Spanish-speaking neighborhood at that time. I kind of wanted to connect with my neighborhood and my neighbors. I actually just met more Jews. I met other people, too, but it was like I met more people like me, and realized that there was something very abstract about what we were doing. I never really quite knew if the medical supplies we sent got to the hospitals, and these kinds of things.

CINZIA ARRUZZA

A Road Trip from the East Coast to the West Coast... and back

Symbols matter: “mic check,” the various consensus-related hand gestures, the occupation of public and semi-public spaces, the tents (where allowed), and also the attempt to postpone the NYSE morning bell. All this gave the movement the kind of personality and appeal it has. After three months however, it is time to ask whether symbols or symbolic struggle are enough. If they're not enough, what should we do?

Answers or at least partial answers come from the movement itself; but it is not always easy to see and name them. My suggestion: Look at the West Coast.

On November 2, Occupy Oakland organized a general strike in response to their eviction, and shut down the city's port for a day. For December 12, a Port Blockade was

organized at some of the nation's busiest ports all along the west coast—from Anchorage, Alaska, to San Diego. In other words, occupations are becoming the center of political and social initiatives capable of attacking the direct economic interests of big companies and speculators. This offers rank and file workers the opportunity to join the struggle independently of the support of their union officials. I am not suggesting we mechanically apply models that are effective elsewhere. I am suggesting that we try to decipher the dynamic taking place in Oakland and consider whether we should follow a similar path here in New York, in our own way.

The December 6 day of action against foreclosures was an attempt to shift the focus from symbolic protest against financial capitalism to actions more concrete, taking back spaces and buildings. Considering the enormous economic and political power of private real estate interests in New York, and its related social consequences—for instance, the continual expulsion of working class people and people of color from gentrifying neighborhoods—the campaign against foreclosures pushes in the same direction as the port blockade: We are attacking

the economic interests of capitalists and empowering those who are exploited and marginalized. This too explains why the struggle of CUNY students against tuition hikes is so important: In these struggles there is the seed for a national student movement for free education. Empowerment requires more than taking part in meetings, or having the opportunity to say what one thinks, or breaking some rule. It is also, importantly, a matter of gaining some victory: ending tuition hikes; gaining better rights and contracts for workers; arresting foreclosures; and taking back what has been stolen from working people, students, and all who are excluded, marginalized or disempowered at the hands of neoliberal and austerity policies.

In Italy, where I am from and where I have been an activist and organizer for some twenty years, the situation is similar. We

too have been struggling with to locate concrete strategies for gains after more than two decades of constant defeat: privatization of public goods and services, the elimination of labor rights, attacks on wages, budget cuts for public education and health care, pension reform, and attacks against immigrants' rights to name but a few. These measures not only disempower, but also contribute to the divisions and disorganization of exploited and marginalized people and often times serve to increase inner antagonisms and hierarchies—for example among native and immigrant workers, or between men and women.

This is why I think that discussion within the movement should shift from issues of democratic procedure to political strategy. I say this because while the attention to horizontal democracy can benefit the reconstruction of social

How can we cut to the chase? Whatever. And there were a lot of ideas. I don't think a general was ever one of them. I think at some point, as things got really awful, I became much more militant in visualizing ACT UP as an army, which didn't go down very well.

SS: Do you think that you personally wanted the attention?

LK: I don't look at it or that or myself that way. The whole thing about ACT UP is results. That's all I was interested in. I was not interested in airy-fairy theories. Results. How do we get these fucking drugs? That's what it was all about. How do we get them? And it was a slow process to getting them. And if I had to go out there and yell at somebody, I made myself able to do that. Again, you may find it hard to believe, but I am essentially a shy person, and it became like a Jekyll and Hyde thing, and I took so much of my energy from everyone else. That gave it to me.

SS: I want to ask you a little bit about yourself, as a person with AIDS, in the ACT UP context. When did you begin to think that you were positive? At what point in all of this?

LK: Theoretically, I still don't have AIDS. I've never had a defining illness, and I've never had low enough markers. I am the luckiest man alive. I never had to take any HIV drugs, until I got my liver. And the only reason I had to take it was because the transplant people insisted, to protect the liver. They wanted to keep HIV in check – whether it was out of check or not.

SS: So, you've been HIV-positive, asymptomatic?

LK: Since – I forgot when I was tested already – '85, '86.

SS: And why do you think you were asymptomatic?

LK: I am lucky. I have no idea. Not everybody, but almost everybody I knew is dead from those years.

Gregg Bordowitz

SS: I just want to get back to the theory/action relationship. So a committee or a constituency would have a need, and then the organization as whole would do the action to facilitate that need?

GB: Not necessarily. Sometimes ideas came from the floor on Monday night. As the group got more established, it became more formal in its informal institutionalization, meaning that the people like me and others, who went to meetings on a nightly basis, were in a position to do consensus-building among smaller groups before the large meeting would happen. So I became aware of this, and I'm sure other people were aware of this as well, that if you wanted to present an idea to the group, and you wanted to win



PHOTO OF BROADWAY AT ZUCCOTTI PARK BY MARK GREIF

movements and dissuade co-optation, the fetishization of democratic, consensual procedures can also have a paralyzing outcome. In the last weeks of the occupation of Liberty Square, it often felt like deliberation around procedures had replaced political debate. In such a situation, democracy risks becoming a matter of formalities rather than a matter of substance. We should ask is: democracy for whom, to arrive where, and to obtain what? In other words, can we really separate the discussion on democratic procedures from that which examines who the social agents of this movement are, what we want to do together, and what we want to win?

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How democratic is consensus? Can we work together only if we all agree on what is to be done? Do we risk political homogenization if we

fail to account for the possibility of persistent disagreement? Can we not consider the movement a process through which decisions are made despite disagreements, and with a resolve to work together regardless? I would favor a decision-making process that relies on majority vote, but one that combines with the consensus proves and encourages the discussion respectful of the reciprocal differences. Nothing prevents us from submitting the decisions we make to constant verification, testing them in practice and changing them if they prove wrong. The same holds for creating forms of coordination that use at least some partial elements of delegation. Student movements in France, for example, adopt forms of elective coordination at the national level. These coordinating bodies are subject to constant control and can be called off from below in every

moment. In this way the student groups are capable of coordinating the struggle among different campuses on a national level and to share and expand effective strategies. The student movement in France is among the few social movements of the last years which effectively won battles—for example, the protest against the CPE (first employment contract) in 2006.

It is not only the insistence on consensus procedures that may steer the movement toward simplification and homogenization, but also the language around the 99%. It is an effective and evocative slogan, reminding us, as it does, of the power of numbers: We, the exploited and oppressed, are the majority of the world's population. And although it takes the first step at building solidarity, we need to go further. This requires identifying the complexity of the groups that make up this majority. Capitalism does not create but two social classes, a homogenous 1% and a homogenous 99%. There are in fact more than two, and they are characterized by inner divisions, hierarchies, and antagonisms—among the working class, between white people and people of color, between women and men and those who identify as LGBQIT and so on. These divisions and hierarchies may be structurally created and implemented by capitalism, but they are real.

In practice, this means identifying strategies that create connection and cooperation among the different sectors of this heterogeneous 99%. Solidarity is not automatic and can only be the outcome of our collective effort. We need to do more than examine the ways in which we reproduce power relations among us by turning our efforts toward common goals and campaigns that can concretely unite our struggles.

For example, the police brutality against the students at UC Davis and Baruch, as well as the OWS protesters more generally, is making apparent a pervasive and longtime problem: The systematic use of police repression as a fundamental tool for the defense and reproduction of the relations of exploitation. The use of police repression affects not only protesters, but more significantly, it affects the everyday life of people of color and immigrants in our communities. The outcry over pepper spray and other forms of police brutality should therefore be part of a more general campaign against repression and police brutality. The marches against the “Stop and frisk program” in both Harlem and Brooklyn were a first step in this direction, but they need to be taken further still.

Finally, politics always has many protagonists with different agendas and different goals. The Occupy movement is not the only protagonist of political discussion and dynamic of these last months. Other agents are not just watching us and waiting—they are acting. As the presidential election draws closer, the campaign machine will put a lot of pressure on the movement. The SEIU, who supported the Obama's candidacy, and as a result on November 17 we marched on the sidewalk of the Brooklyn Bridge, instead of blocking the bridge, an idea which was circulating among protesters and occupiers in the previous weeks. In other words, and this is another question we should ask, what is a strategy for preserving the autonomy of the movement? Is the practice of consensus sufficient? Or should we not be talking, as we have started in the last weeks, about the concrete struggles, strikes, occupations to expand the movement from squares to communities, schools,



consensus, then you had to do a certain amount of campaigning within the group. You couldn't just come up with a speech that would sway hearts and minds on the floor on Monday night. You had to develop that speech, you had to develop that rhetoric, and you had to do a lot of face-to-face politicking along the way in order to gain consensus.

I don't think there's anything ominous about this. This is how grassroots, democratic politics work. To a certain extent, this is how democratic politics is supposed to work in general. You convince people of the validity of your ideas. You have to go out there and convince people.

It was roiling. The feeling of ACT UP in its heyday—this was like 1988—when the room was packed, and you could hardly get into the ground floor of the Gay Community Center. If the weather was nice, the meeting spills out into the courtyard. There is business happening all over the place. It's very difficult for the people who are actually running the meeting to get the attention of the group. There is all kinds of sexiness going on, as well. There is all kinds of cruising going on on the sides, and eye catching, and chattiness. There was an energy in the group that was amazing, because it was filled with people who had ideas, filled with people who had energies, filled with a kind of erotic energy. And all that came together. It was in some ways like a bazaar of desires. So it was amazing that anything got done. An enormous amount got done.



workplaces, media, sites of production and circulation of commodities? Actions like the port blockade, the disruption of Sotheby's auctions, the day of action against foreclosure—those which make us forcibly autonomous and incompatible with institutional parties and union leaderships—should become the main pattern we follow for the expansion and escalation of the movement.

Escalation will require us to grow in numbers, to expand outside the squares, to give an

impetus to real social struggles. The movement must become a source of coordination and visibility for these struggles that, in the last decade, have been isolated and sometimes in antagonism with each other, while also hidden away under noisy mainstream institutional politics. Forms of action and civil disobedience should be discussed in a concrete and not abstract way, accounting each and every time the specific circumstances and trying to iden-

tify the form most likely to lead to movement expansion.

I've asked a lot of questions and I don't have all the answers. I don't have them, because we need collective discussion and action to find them. Struggling is not merely a matter of staging big events one after the other; it requires continuity and the sometimes more boring work of patient organizing, weaving together different experiences, keeping the memory of this collective experience, of what we have done, what we have lost and what we have won. This why the most democratic forms of organizations are, in reality, those which allow us to think and act strategically and those which empower us—for they allow us to struggle, today but also tomorrow.

MARINA SITRIN

Some Issues with horizontalism

Horizontalidad is a word that first came about in Argentina as a part of the 2001 popular rebellion. Not having a similar word in English it has been imperfectly translated as horizontalism. Imperfect because it is not an 'ism, and in fact is more of an anti-ism, attempting to create social relationships that break with hierarchy and ideological frameworks. As its name suggests, horizontalism is about creating

Daniel Marcus

From Occupation to Communization

I first heard the slogan “Occupy Everything” in 2009 during the anti-privatization protests that shook the University of California, where I have been a graduate student since 2007. During the first weeks of the fall semester, that slogan gradually came to mean something specific, something razor-sharp, in a way that has been diluted in the present wave of protests. On September 24th, when students at UC Santa Cruz occupied the Graduate Student Commons, the words “Occupy Everything” could be seen spray-painted on the side of the building. The same moment saw the publication of pamphlets and websites devoted to theorizing and propagating occupations, bearing the slogan, “Occupy Everything, Demand Nothing.” But it was the slogan of a vanguard, not the broad majority of protesters, and referred to the controversial tactic of forcibly locking down campus buildings with bike locks and barricades without any provision of demands or benchmarks for de-escalation. Occupations were a contentious tactic both inside and outside the organizing coalition, especially since the point wasn't to force a negotiation with the administration, it was rather to block business as usual—and also, at least in theory, to wrench a parcel of space and time free from the capitalist order. This last point proved to be an Achilles heel for the UC occupations, since the occupiers had to rely on the very structures and temporalities of student protest they aimed to supercede. What they wanted was a commune—to communize, more specifically—but this would remain an elusive horizon during the first two years of campus revolt.

As far as I'm aware, the tactic of no-demands occupations originated in France during the 2006 anti-CPE protests, when the administration of the Sorbonne preemptively blocked access to the campus in order to prevent it from being occupied as it had been in May 1968—a decision that, ironically, prompted the students to occupy. The French roots of the occupation movement go deep; in fact, there's about a decade's worth of para-academic French Marxism woven into the tactics and ideas of the first wave of occupiers at the UC and other American universities (the New School's occupation predated ours by a year)—not only The Coming Insurrection, but also writings by the less well-known (though equally shadowy) collective *Théorie Communiste*, who argue against the familiar forms of class struggle, trade unionism above all, as possible fixes for the present crisis. These were not the only progenitors of the occupations at the UC; that list is too varied and internecine to recount here. I only want to emphasize that circa 2009, the occupation movement was undergirded at least in part by a specifically Marxist set of ideas about capitalism and class struggle. These ideas seem to have vanished from the present debate over the future of Occupy—to our loss, I'd argue.

Back in 2009, the tactical rejection of demands was meant as a vote of no confidence in the wage system, and also in the instrumentalization of education as a means of reproducing that system. Moreover, the occupations were understood to signal, for some instinctually, for others intellectually, that the horizons of struggle were emphatically not those of ancestral socialism: there is no longer any possibility of going back to the arcadia of the workers' state; now, revolution will be made by piecing together the apparatus of redistribution on the outside, in the cold of the commons, without wages or benefits. If the refusal of labor was once the endpoint of autonomist struggle, the campus occupiers understood the stakes to have been reversed: the rebels are not the workers but the jobless, the debtors, the underemployed, the precarious, and the socially and economically marginal. These considerations may not directly animate the current wave of occupations, but they are still very much alive in the tactics of the Occupy movement.

As springtime approaches, it will be vital to rethink the tactic of occupations together with the history of capitalism and class struggle. At present, some factions within the movement seem content with an amnesiac view of the camps and assemblies, which they regard as prefiguring a return to postwar progressivism. For example, the OWS Demands Working Group has called for “a massive public works and public service program with direct government employment at prevailing (union) wages, paid for by taxing the rich

and corporations, by immediately ending all of America's wars, and by ending all aid to authoritarian regimes to create 25 million new jobs.” While these are all fine things, they have as their premise the wrong assumption that some version of the welfare state represents a timeless form of the political and economic good. But the welfare state was only ever invented to serve a partisan set of interests—those of capitalists—and could not have been built save during a bygone period of capitalism's global development, when the costs of welfare and high employment were capable of being offset by the profitability of modernizing production. Yes, the labor movement did force capitalists to internalize many of the costs of workers' social reproduction, but it did this in an era of spectacular growth. Nothing could be further from the present-day scenario. Bear in mind that the greatest expansion of the welfare state took place during capitalism's golden age in the 1950s-60s: the point was not to build a good, equal, or just society, but rather to draw workers further into the system of production, extending that system to encompass nearly every aspect of lived experience. If the 20th century was the proletariat's utopia, it was also its hell.

No amount of wishful thinking will bring back the days of heaven and hell, though. Now there is only hell, bleak and disastrous. Capitalism has been failing since the late 1960s, when its previous temporary fix—the rapid modernization of production in advanced economies, coupled with reasonably generous social welfare—stopped doing the trick. If the welfare state beckons on the horizons of Zuccotti Park, it can only be a mirage, a trick of the light playing on the shields of the riot police. I don't mean this as a slight to the occupiers, though—far from it. For if anything about Occupy is encouraging, it is that in the first weeks of the present wave of occupations, veritable communes were set up in literally dozens of American cities, distributing food, shelter, and first aid freely and to all comers. Regardless of whether they understood their activities under the rubric of Marxism, these new bands of occupiers have already achieved what we at the UC were unable to pull off in the heady days of 2009, creating living breathing communism in some of the least communal places imaginable.

Critics will say that while these small acts of communism are well and good, they will never be able to provide for the millions who depend on capitalism for daily bread. This is true, but only if one considers the movement as an all-or-nothing gamble: either replace the capitalist system part for part or else admit defeat. We need not cling to this false opposition, which rests on the supposition that communism will be a change in the ownership of capitalism (from top-down to bottom-up) rather than an attack on the system tout court. While the dictatorship of the proletariat may have seemed viable during the era of centralized industrial production, today the production and circulation of capital is more discontinuous than ever; the forces of labor are cruelly disunited. Now, the winds of revolution blow not from the factories and shipyards but from outside the ranks of waged labor. For workers in the de-industrialized world, it is now a question of surviving the loss of jobs and social services—and, along the cutting edge of class struggle, of abolishing the wage system altogether. This, I would argue, is the role played by the movement of communes relative to capitalism: not to put workers in control of the system of exploitation, but to lay the groundwork for a retreat from that system. It should come as no surprise that the occupations provided havens for the jobless and homeless, and that the police called on to evict the camps are well-paid suburbanites. As the movement of the communes pushes forward, these divisions, between the waged and wageless, the self-policing professionals and the communards, will only widen. This split must not be construed as external or opposed to the movement; it is the movement's clearest form of expression.

As for the practical tasks of the communes, I defer to *Théorie Communiste's* account of what's to be done and how: The process of communization begins, they argue, with “the destruction of exchange: this means the workers attacking the banks which hold their accounts and those of other workers, thus making it necessary to manage without; this means the workers communicating their “products” to themselves and the community directly and without market; this means the homeless occupying homes, thus “obliging” construction workers to produce freely, the construction workers taking from the shops at liberty, obliging the whole class to organize to seek food in the sectors to be collectivized, etc. Let's be clear about this. There is no measure which, in itself, taken separately, is “communism.” To distribute goods, to directly circulate means of production and raw

a flat plane upon which to communicate—but it is not only this. Horizontalism implies the use of direct democracy and the striving for consensus, processes in which attempts are made so that everyone is heard and new relationships are created.

As a new form of relating, horizontalism can create some confusion. We have been feeling this quite a bit in New York, as have other cities and towns around the country.

The idea that horizontalism can be a thing, something that exists simply by saying so, and therefore by its invocation it is somehow brought into practice, is not quite right. We cannot become horizontal merely by declaring ourselves horizontal, or willing ourselves into horizontalism. This can create more than confusion; sometimes it can lead to anger and frustration. If a person is told that all have an equal voice, and that there is no hierarchy, and that our relationships are all prefigurative, and then that person has an experience where they do not feel heard or respected (or

prefigured!), she feels betrayed. And worse, if we collectively do not see horizontalism as a process, we are less likely to do the hard work of breaking down hierarchy and trying to create power with one another.

A question often raised with regard to horizontalism and direct democracy is that of time. These meetings are sometimes very long. And yet most such criticisms come from those not actively participating in horizontal forms of assemblies. This is not to say that the assemblies do not take a great deal of time, because they do, and this is a real challenge, but that the critique that “regular” people cannot participate because the assemblies go on too long ignores the fact that “regular” people watch football games that last three and a half hours. While long, for many the process is a part of the very democracy being created. People speaking and being heard, often for the first time, is incredibly important in the formation of horizontal relationships.

That being said, not all assemblies are the same, and there is a

difference between a long assembly that is going in the direction of a concrete project, and an assembly for the sake of discussion alone. One of the things that makes speaking and hearing one another so meaningful is results. These results do not have to be massive—they just need to be results.

In Argentina, those assemblies that seemed to create the least amount of frustration and critique were those in the recuperated workplaces and other movements that were together working on very concrete and often territorially based projects. Assemblies that created the most frustration were those with more abstract points and items, such as ending poverty. Even if everyone agreed that we should end poverty, the length of the discussion around which there was no concrete proposal resulted in frustration and, eventually, people leaving the assemblies.

Leadership and Power

Another challenge to horizontalism is the question of leadership. In Argentina, as with our Occupy movements, the initial response to the question of leadership was to declare that there were no leaders. But I think it is useful to be a little more clear here. When most people respond that there are no leaders, they actually mean that we are trying to create a space without hierarchy—where people do not have power over each other. If we think about our assemblies and spaces of organization, there are often times when one voice is listened to differently, and sometimes more, than another voice. This is especially true when we are discussing areas

where some people might have more experience than others, such as media, legal, structure, medical, etc. It is also true with some movement participants who have many more years of organizing experience, as well as those who have shown themselves to be especially clear both when speaking and when acting. How else do we listen to one another differently? Depending on the circumstances I think there are many ways we listen differently and sometimes more actively to one person over another. I see this differential listening as related to the question of leadership. If one person’s voice is heard more, are they not a leader in some way? And if they are, how can we discuss this in a way that is open? I believe we can still create horizontal spaces, and yet recognize that some people are heard differently on different subjects.

When we do not admit that there is difference in how people are heard, an informal hierarchy can emerge.

Structure of Horizontal Decision Making Spaces

Horizontal spaces do not simply occur spontaneously. To create a space where all people can speak and be heard requires organization and structure. How much structure and organization depends on the group, how long they have known one another, their relationships, etc. Having structures, such as agreements for behavior to one another, can go a long way in helping to remind people how to act, or not act, towards one another. Additionally, having facilitators who are trained and committed to support not only the agreements on



property and domination. The society of accumulation will not be abolished by “taking” and “holding” spaces or resources, it will be abolished when spaces and resources are used in a manner that permits us to live without capitalism. One need have no particular scruples about how this should be done; for example, it is immaterial how one gathers the materials needed to keep the commune going—whether one pays for them, builds them, steals them, or buys them on credit—so long as one enables the commune to grow, to incorporate more capital, like a phagocyte in the economic bloodstream. Nor does it matter whether or not the commune has these means from the get-go; the point is to acquire them, after all, and that takes time. While it is certainly important what spatial form the communes take, the centralized model of OWS is already giving way to more dispersed territorial arrangements. Indeed, it is foreseeable that the geography of communization will oscillate in the coming months between centrality and dispersion, and between visibility and invisibility.

The springtime will bring many new experiments and tactics: new camps, newly occupied homes and buildings, unforeseeable shutdowns of industry and commerce—and too, new modes of reactionary violence directed against the movement. We should remember, though, that we pose no real threat to capitalism if we leave untouched the bonds that tie us to it. We will fail if we merely support the reclamation of foreclosed or abandoned homes without questioning the sanctity of our own property, whether owned or rented. We will fail if our wages are not made into the common resource of communal subsistence. We will fail if debtors are permitted to suffer privately. There can be no movement of communes if protest is merely an extracurricular activity of wage-earners: workers will have to choose whether they stand with the communes or with the bosses and administrators. Make no mistake, though: the machine of communization has merely to be started up; its engine is already primed. The era of the Party is over—long live the communes!

materials, to use violence against the existing state: fractions of capital can achieve some of these things in certain circumstances. That which is communist is not “violence” in itself, nor “distribution” of the shit that we inherit from class society, nor “collectivization” of surplus-value sucking machines: it is the nature of the movement which connects these actions and underlies them, renders them the moments of a process which can only communize even further, or be crushed.”

Though I have difficulty imagining a scenario in which workers voluntarily destroy their own means of subsistence, it seems right to insist that any alternative to the capitalist system will have to begin by abolishing private property. This might mean expropriating goods and spaces or blockading factories, freeways, and refineries, but it can also mean reallocating currently existing property for the use of the commune—unlocking the functional capacities of money, shelter, and technology in order to secure the development and expansion of wageless society. Make no mistake, though: what is “communist” about a commune is not the sum of radical actions carried out in the name of the collective. Feeding and providing shelter to the homeless and jobless are laudable activities, but they are not in themselves anti-capitalist. The same goes for strikes, port blockades, debt abolition, and the re-occupation of foreclosed homes. Whatever the merits of these actions, the point is that they are negligible qua communism absent a general movement toward the abolition of property and the wage system. The point is not to put the jobless back to work, in other words, but to make it possible to live without a wage or personal wealth. To those critics who respond, “But people want jobs—and besides, without a wage no one would be able to survive,” we should respond that it is the fundamental problem of the capitalist system that the employment of our skills, talents, and resources is forcibly yoked to the engine of capitalist accumulation. It is no utopia of leisure or play that we are proposing, only a society wherein our ability to work is no longer a commodity traded on the market, but is rather the immediate support of our common sustenance.

When we speak of communes, then, we are not interested in intentional communities or retreats into the wilderness. We are simply demanding that the conditions of free life established, if only fleetingly, within the Occupy camps be generalized and volatilized. The term communization does not describe a shift from one economic system (capitalism) to its opposite; instead, it indicates the process (communism) by which capital is converted directly and immediately into the means of social reproduction for everyone—that is, for all those who cannot stand anymore to live under capitalism or who have been excluded from it. The point of the movement of communes is precisely to develop the capacity, or capacities, for disengaging as many people as possible away from the systems of wage labor and private property; this can only be done by way of an additive process, beginning with small acts of communization by which new relations and capacities are developed—for example, distributing food and basic services free of cost, collectivizing the wages and rents/mortgages of those with jobs and homes, establishing general assemblies and other apparatuses of self-governance, organizing the expropriation of unused property and resources, developing and broadening a solidarity economy with local producers and shippers, and so on. The basic formula of communization of simple: by abolishing property, we make free life possible, even if only locally and temporarily; by making free life possible, however, we make the expansion of communes inevitable.

To critics of the movement of communes, we should reply that the only limits to communization are those imposed by forms of thought inherited from capitalism. We are communists whenever we prioritize cooperation over competition, social over individual life. Likewise, we are reactionaries whenever we retreat to the comfortable enclosures of

behavior, but the collective agenda as well. For example, if there is disruption during the assembly, the facilitators need to use the power of the group. This can mean identifying the issue, and if it is an individual causing the disruption, asking the group if they think the person should be able to keep speaking out of turn, perhaps using a straw poll to do so, and if they do not think the person should continue, then using the group consensus to tell the person they cannot disrupt and must stop speaking. Sometimes this can even mean asking the group if they agree that if the person keeps talking out of turn they should leave. I have seen this happen successfully in Argentina. And sometimes the regular disrupters are silenced, and sometimes they are made to leave. Also, in Argentina, there were times when assemblies would take a break when someone tried to dominate, with the participants literally turning their backs on the disrupter until they stopped speaking. When disruption is so loud and aggressive that the assembly cannot continue it is a block to the democratic process the group has agreed to. It is up to the group, with the help of the facilitator to prevent the disruption. Asking or telling people to leave because they block democracy is not inconsistent with creating a horizontal space, and in fact, is what can help maintain it. I am not going to argue that all people who disrupt are paid by some nefarious source to behave in that way (though historically many

have been), but, imagine if they were. How easy would it be to break our horizontal process if we let whoever wanted to talk, shout or disrupt do so without collectively doing something about it? Being firm and using our democratic structures to facilitate more horizontal relationships is key to the process and goal of horizontalism.

Neka, from the unemployed workers movement of Solano, on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, Argentina, reminds us that horizontalism is a process, one that we all need to continue to adapt as we use it.

“First we began learning something together, it was a sort of waking up to a knowledge that was collective, and this has to do with a collective self-awareness of what was taking place within all of us. First we began by asking one another, and ourselves questions, and from there we began to resolve things together. Each day we continue discovering and constructing while walking. It is like each day is a horizon that opens before us, and this horizon does not have any recipe or program, we begin here, without what was in the past. What we had was life, our life each day, our difficulties, problems, crisis, and what we had in our hands at the time was what we used to go looking for solutions. The beginning of the practice of horizontalidad can be seen in this process. More than an answer to a practice, it is an every day practice.”

Nicholas Mirzoeff

OCCUPY CLIMATE CHANGE

Occupy climate change! Why? Because the transformations that Occupy seeks in social and economic life are the same as those needed to sustain conditions suitable for life on our planet. We can call this “prosperity without growth,” a way of life that promotes the greatest happiness without raising energy consumption.

It is notable that Brookfield, the owners of Zuccotti Park/Liberty Plaza, are also planning the pipeline to bring Canadian tar sands oil to the US, an action that NASA scientist James Hansen has described as “game over” for the atmosphere. The one percent tells us that climate is a future concern, but the present must be devoted to public austerity and private profit. We retort: climate change is here, it is now, and it is the action of the one percent.

Climate change is here: the climate system is planetary in ways that humans are still learning to understand. While current predictions show that those most responsible for emissions, such as the US and China, will not be systemically affected as much as Africa and the Pacific Small Island Nations, no one is escaping the rise in intense weather events.

SILVIA FEDERICI

Women, Austerity, and the Unfinished Feminist Revolution

If there was ever a doubt about the long-term nature of the austerity programs that have been imposed on us in recent years, those doubts should be put to rest. It is clear austerity measures are not just a reaction to this or that “crisis” but part of an ongoing attempt to shift power relations. Thanks to

our “sacrifices” all now is well in capital’s land. Profits and productivity are at record highs. Banks once festering with toxic assets are stuffed with money. Nevertheless, short of a mass mobilization like the one the Occupy Movement is organizing, 2012 promises to be a gloomy year for most of the country, as we are faced with more cuts in the social spending essential to our survival.

Despite the enormous hardship that people are experiencing in their lives, state after state is preparing to destroy what remains of their investment in social reproduction. Top on the list are all those programs that for many people make a difference between life and death. Senior centers and home care assistance to the elderly who are not self-sufficient, but struggling to remain independent and not be confined to nursing homes;



ZUCCOTTI PARK, DECEMBER 2 PHOTO BY MARK GREIF

health insurance for low income families, providing medicines, dental care, visits to doctors; programs to keep children safe after school hours and school programs themselves; and then subsidies for family provided daycare, funds for shelters for battered wives and the list goes on: to different degrees, across the country, all are slated to be cut. The federal government too is doing its share, eliminating programs like the Low Income Home Energy Assistance which helps keeping millions warm through the winter, and community block grants that fund services for the poor. Meanwhile Social Security is more than ever under attack, though for many retirees it is the only source of income.

What do these cuts signify? And how will women be affected by them?

That austerity is part of the neo-liberal project to

restore power to the elites is generally acknowledged. What is less recognized is that it is an attempt to force workers to take on all the costs of their reproduction and as such it places a particular burden on women. The projected budget cuts are designed to eliminate all pockets of social spending that do not appear immediately productive. Not surprisingly, those most targeted are low-income children and elderly, obviously seen as expendable, worthy at best of jails and nursing homes. The ideological justification is the same that has served to defend the cuts in public education. Behind the platitudes about a balanced budget, the assumption taking hold is that our reproduction is a private rather than a public good, something we alone benefit from, for which

government therefore bears no responsibility. That the entire business world profits from the activities that reproduce us, enabling us to reappear everyday in millions of workplaces, is a truth the political class has exorcized from public discourse. One of the crucial tasks facing a mass movement like Occupy Wall Street is mobilizing a feminist "consciousness raising" campaign, putting the spotlight on this issue and demystifying the attempt to privatize our everyday reproductive activities or portray them as micro-enterprises.

There is another secret implicit in the new austerity deal which makes a feminist perspective of the essence. It is clearly expected that in the aftermath of the new cuts women will make up for the loss. This is not simply a matter of historical tendencies, nor is it because the services cut are those that more easily will fall back on the shoulders of women. Although women today are the bulk of the workforce – often working two or three jobs—all social statistics indicate that they are the ones who do most of the unpaid domestic labor in the home, and carry the main responsibility for their families' reproduction. Indeed, many are already living at a breaking point,

in a state of constant stress and anxiety that no amount of anti-depressants can alleviate.

Under these circumstances, having to take on more work to care for a child or an elderly parent, to keep one's family healthy despite cuts to healthcare, prepare food previously bought, wash more clothes by hand, walk to more places to save on gasoline or ride a bus, all the while endlessly calculating how to cut costs, and calculate what can or cannot be afforded, is to see one's life turn into a hell. Yet, refusal to comply is severely punished. Those who try to better their living conditions by juggling credit cards or writing phony checks, or numb themselves by doing drugs have been given a harsh treatment, as shown by the rise in the number of women in jail which has leaped by 700% in the last three decades.

What has to be done then to reverse this trend? Clearly a broad coalition of social forces must come together, such as the one coalesced by the Occupy Movement. But what is also needed is a new feminist initiative on the terrain of social reproduction, which the official feminist movement in the seventies practically abandoned by embracing waged work, on the assumption that production for the market is the

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During Hurricane Irene, it emerged that a storm surge of only four feet over normal highs would inundate lower Manhattan. The effects of the gradual sea level rise caused by climate change render such high intensity events likely to be annual, rather than once a century. Soon, the only way to occupy Liberty Plaza will be to swim.

Climate change is now: 2010 saw the single greatest rise in warming gas emissions in human history. The International Energy Authority, big oil boosters in the ordinary way, have calculated that, because of new power plant construction already underway, we have until 2017 to stop the increase in emissions. The rhetoric across US politics that climate change is something we should worry about for the sake of our children or even grandchildren is, then, disastrously misplaced.

We spent trillions on the "war on terror" based on what former Vice-President Dick Cheney actually called the "one per cent" doctrine. What he meant was that if there was a one per cent chance of a terrorist action, the US had to act. Ninety-eight per cent of all climate scientists agree that climate change is real and getting worse. Meanwhile all Republican candidates for President deny that climate change even exists, and the current President never utters the phrase for fear of angering Fox News.

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highest good, regardless of the nature of its products and who really benefits from it. Even today there are feminists who hold on to this belief, as exemplified by a speech Heidi Hartmann, President of the Institute for Policy Research and long time feminist economist, gave in 2009 at the peak of the financial crisis:

The United States is a woman's success story in many ways ... Women's increased [labor participation] reflects their growing commitment to paid work and a corresponding reduction in time spent on family care over the life cycle; their increased training and

education tend to draw women into the labor market and keep them there.

It is thanks to this concentration on women's participation in the labor market as the measure of improvement in their social condition that women in the US today still lack entitlements (like paid maternity leave) common even in poor countries, leaving them to function as 'plugs' in the gaps opened by the cuts in social services. Ironically, however, it is the very lack of any public investment in social reproduction that is most likely responsible for the stagnation, since 1999, in the percentage of women in waged employment.

Nor can we expect action from global governance. The UN Convention on Climate Change, meeting in Durban as I write, is talking about beginning its emissions limitations in 2020 and eliminating Kyoto, the one legally binding treaty that exists. Like the police so much in evidence these days, all these forms of governance say to us "move on, there's nothing to see here."

In response, indigenous and First Nation peoples have joined with climate and social justice activists to occupy the convention. This action, Occupy COP17 (the cumbersome name of the conference), has yet to be mentioned in mainstream US media. A statement by Occupy COP17 was read at Liberty Plaza on Saturday, December 3, Global Climate Justice Day: "The same financial, corporate and political institutions that caused the financial crisis are poised to seize control of our atmosphere, our forests, our agricultural lands and water. We will fight for our survival and not allow the elite to enter into a suicide pact for future generations."

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Paradoxically, the moment of eviction is the perfect time to occupy climate change. The more that our ideas, rather than our encampments, are the center of the movement, the more they need to think about the connections between the local and the global. It's estimated that there will be some 250 million climate migrants. Across the Pacific Small Island States from Kiribati in the West to Tuvalu in the South and the Carteret Islands in the East, people are already abandoning islands and settlements. Some are flooded, others made uninhabitable by the salination of the soil. We stand for their right to occupy their homes, the places where they choose to be, just as we support the right to occupy the commons.

Indeed, the political invisibility of climate change within the current system even as the actual consequences of ongoing climate change become more and more apparent is the refusal to accept that the planetary majority has an equal claim to the right to existence. This is the first claim in the Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth made at Cochabamba, Bolivia, in 2008 by the World People's Conference on Climate Change as part of the campaign for the "decolonization of the atmosphere."

The standard reaction to such events in developed nations is a 'more in sorrow than anger' shake of the head: and then we carry on, there's nothing to see here. What Pacific small islands, developing nations, indigenous peoples and the global majority living on less than \$2 a day have long known is that from the point of view of finance capital we are all, to cite the Micronesian activist Juan Aguon, "disposable humanity." It's interesting to see the fake concern from the media about the homeless and other marginalized groups who congregate at Occupy sites. No one seems to ask why, in the richest nation in the world, any small encampment attracts such a following.

For subsidized childcare centers are hard to come by, and with 15 million unemployed, families all over the country are pulling their children out of those they must pay for, which leads to a sharp decline in attendance.

Our task, then, in opposing this new round of budget cuts and the destructive impact they will have on future generations, is to reconstruct feminism, unearthing that revolutionary core that the institutionalization of the feminist movement in the eighties and nineties marginalized, and yet continues to shape the politics of women's grassroots activism across the planet. For a start, we need to revitalize the feminist project of exposing the debt employers and the state owe to those who perform the manifold task of reproducing life and reproducing the workforce in our society. For the existence of this great pool of unpaid labor, largely invisible and primarily performed by women, replaces the services the state more and more refuses to provide. But above all, against the misery of "the job" as offered in the capitalist market, we need to revalue the work involved in our reproduction, as the foundation for finding new revolutionary alternatives to the capitalist failure to produce a life worth living, in the homes, the farms, the schools, and the factories of the world.

By occupying the symbolic space of authority we make visible the casualties of the prison-industrial system, the refusal of mental health services to the majority of the population, the deployment of narcotics as the literal opiate of the masses, and all those other things we're not supposed to see. The paradox of Occupy is that it has been forced to organize its pessimism in the very last spaces of "the social" as the police extend the boundary of the administrative state—which only they have authority to visualize—to be co-extensive with what there is.

Now, after the evictions, we need to turn around and see that the space we are contesting is an island and the waters are rising. The refusal of the global one per cent to recognize the existence and relevance of climate claims is not a denial or a delusion but a political strategy and a choice. As so many have come to realize, our last best hope is the global occupy movement. It's the G 7 Billion and not the G 20 who can make the changes necessary to sustain the biosphere. No election, no cleverly worded document, no demand, no image will forestall our decision to press on regardless. It's up to us now: then again, it always was.

DAMION SEARLES

Thoreau at Zuccotti Park

About five years back I met a well-meaning dumbass at a cocktail party, which was pretty much as good as it got in those days. The talk turned to torture, how he thought it was fine sometimes. This time I said something back. (Sorry about your party, Stephen!) First of all, that the "ticking time bomb" scenario never happens: you never know everything about a disaster about to happen except for one crucial piece of information that someone you have in custody knows. Second, torture doesn't work: the information is unreliable because anyone will say anything to make it stop. And third, torture is evil. It's morally wrong and bad.

The guy said it was refreshing to hear the argument presented so forcefully, which was big of him. I doubt I changed anyone's mind, but underneath the depression that this was even an "argument" we needed to have, I felt somehow better. Later I realized why.

I was editing Thoreau's Journal. In the entry of Dec. 3, 1860, Thoreau writes about an argument he had about John Brown, a year after Brown's execution:

Talking with Walcott and Staples to-day, they declared that John Brown did wrong. When I said that I thought he was right, they agreed [with each other] in asserting that

he did wrong because he threw his life away, and that no man had a right to undertake anything which he knew would cost him his life. I inquired if Christ did not foresee that he would be crucified if he preached such doctrines as he did, but they both, though as if it was their only escape, asserted that they did not believe that he did. Upon which a third party threw in, "You do not think that he had so much foresight as Brown." Of course, they as good as said that, if Christ had foreseen that he would be crucified, he would have "backed out."

Such are the principles and the logic of the mass of men. It is to be remembered that by good deeds or words you encourage yourself, who always have need to witness or hear them.

I had encouraged myself at that cocktail party: there were words I needed to witness in those years, and if no one else would say them I simply had to say them myself, so I could hear them from someone. That's what Thoreau was doing, too, in his argument with Walcott and Staples, and in the many pages he wrote and speeches he gave on John Brown, and in so much of his writing. Doing so literally killed him, it turned out—he stayed up late that snowy December 3rd, arguing instead of recovering from the cold that instead developed into his terminal bronchitis—but as he also wrote, about people who said John Brown threw his life away: what way have they thrown their lives, pray?

Encouragement is underrated, wherever and whenever individual action has been made to seem hopeless. We want to see the results. *The Onion*, as always, nailed it: Nation Waiting For Protesters To Clearly Articulate Demands Before Ignoring Them ("As the Occupy Wall Street protest expands and grows into a nationwide movement, Americans are eagerly awaiting a list of demands from the group so they can then systematically disregard them and continue going about their business..."). That was a few weeks ago; then the collective wisdom in the thoughtful discussions of Occupy Wall Street seemed to converge on their lack of demands being one of the movement's greatest strengths, or at least not a serious weakness. Cynically: it



makes the movement a blank slate onto which anyone can project what they want. Hopefully: it is a practice of democratic involvement, a process, something like being alive.

Thoreau would have been cheered by the people living in Zuccotti Park—would have written a page of bitter irony on the people said to be living elsewhere, and the other occupations they see fit to prefer. He wouldn't have written much about it in his *Journal*, the way he didn't write much about the few signs of hope in the antebellum 1850s, though he joined them (the Underground Railroad, for example). Then again, it's now been three months,

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YOTAM MAROM

Occupy Wall Street Meets Winter: A to-do list

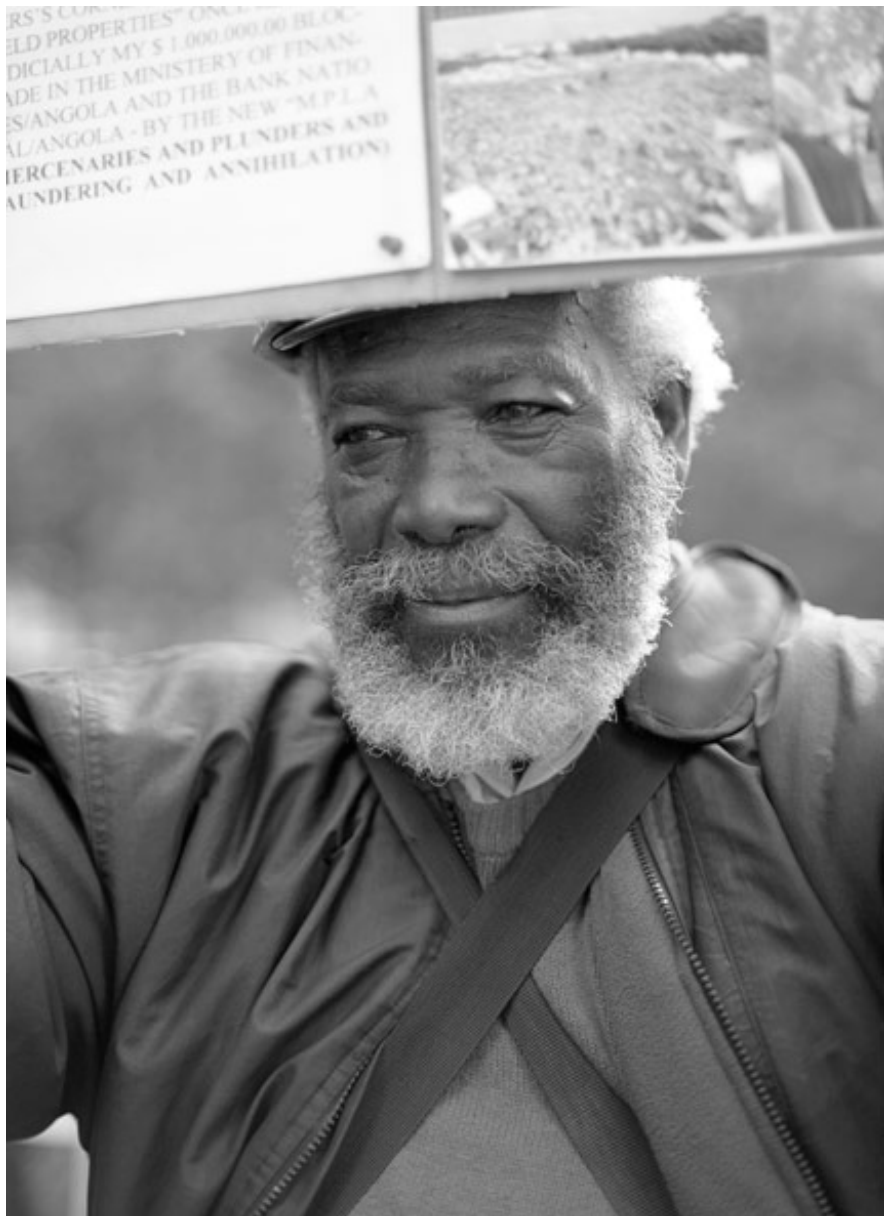
On September 17th, we took Liberty Square and then hit the streets, rejecting the marching permits they offered us, refusing their sidewalks. Since then, the season has changed. Autumn has ended and winter is upon us. We've lost Liberty Square, and each day brings news from across the country that another occupation has been evicted. Winter is here, and with it the cold, the realization that you can't run on empty, not if you want to last. Winter shouts that that the next decade of organizing won't be sustainable if it looks like the first two months that it took to light Autumn's fire. Winter says you we need to be more than a string of events or actions or press releases, more than an endless meeting. Winter brings

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since September 17—a season, approaching fall to approaching winter—and he always loved to track the seasons.

He would savage the Walcotts and Stapleses who complain all around us that the occupiers aren't doing enough, as though doing nothing were better. Walcott and Staples want demands, while the OWSers, it seems to me, are there for its and their own sakes.

It's a strangely Transcendentalist movement, encouraging by example without demanding imitation or anything else—they're not asking you to go camp out in the park any more than Thoreau wanted everyone to live in a cabin. As for me, all I know is that now there is one thing I can bear to see and hear about on the news every day: domestic news bringing something new, an imaginable future that's not like the present.



OWS PORTRAITS BY MATTHEW CONNORS

the knowledge that we won't be in the headlines every day; that burn-out and martyrdom are no good for anyone and no good for the cause. Winter is here to remind us that revolution is not an event but a process, and that social transformation means not only harnessing a moment, but building a movement.

But winter is not sad, and it's not tragic; it's just real. We will use the winter to become the movement we know is necessary.

We Will Not Hibernate: A To-Do List for the Winter

Grow. We will continue to build relationships with communities who have been fighting and building for decades already, from tenants organizing eviction defense in Bed-Stuy, to AIDS activists in the Staten Island. We will grow by taking on struggles that protect people from the daily assaults they experience—from austerity to police brutality—and by waging struggles to meet peoples' needs, like reclaiming foreclosed homes. We will transcend the open calls to action and the expectation that they are enough to build a movement; we will organize the hard way, because the hard way is the only way. We will have the million one-on-one conversations it takes to build a movement, door to door if we have to, and we will

do it out in the open, because we have nothing to fear and nothing to hide.

Deepen. We will finally take the time to learn how to do what we are doing better, from those who have been doing this for so long—from the land liberation movements in Brazil to the women on welfare building community power in Yonkers. We will also teach, because we are reinventing the struggle as we go, and we have learned a lot already. We will ask each other difficult questions we never had time for: How do we organize in a way that is inclusive and liberating? How do we build a movement led by those most marginalized and oppressed? How do we use decentralization to actually empower people and address the imbalances we face in society? We will think radically about what systems and historical processes led us to where we are now, dream deeply about the world we want instead and the institutions we will need in order to live it out, and plan thoroughly for the building and the fighting it will take us to get there.

Build. We will create stable platforms for organizing and growth, and the foundations necessary for a concerted long-term struggle—from facilitation training to office space. We will create mechanisms to meet people's basic needs using the skills we honed at Liberty Plaza to provide things like food, legal aid, shelter, education, and more, and to do it all in a way that is in line with the values of the world we are fighting for. We will continue to build systems for de-centralized coordination and decision-making, because liberation means participation, and participation demands structures for communication, transparency, and accountability. We will take our cue from the neighborhood assemblies in Sunnyside, and the university assemblies at CUNY, who are pioneering a shift from general assemblies to constituent assemblies—assemblies in neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools. We will build there, because that's where people actually live and work, where we have direct, concrete, and permanent relationships with a space, the institutions in it, and the people around us.

Liberate. We will take new space, indoors and outdoors. We will do it because the movement needs bases in which it can create the values of a free society, begin to build the institutions to carry them out, meet peoples' needs, and serve as a staging ground for the struggle against the status quo. We will take space for the movement to have a home and workplace, but we will also take space back for the communities from whom it has been stolen, and for the families who need it in order to survive. We mean not only to take space for its own sake, but to liberate it; we will transform foreclosed houses into homes, empty lots into gardens, abandoned buildings into hospitals, schools, and community centers. We will use the space we win for dreaming up the world to come.

Fight. We will continue to use direct action to intervene in the economic, political, and social processes that govern peoples' lives. We will use our voices and our slogans, our banners and our bodies, to shine a spotlight on the classes and institutions that oppress and exploit. We will make it so that the tyrants who are ruining this planet cannot hold conferences or public events without our presence being felt. We will fight in a way that is not only symbolic, but also truly disruptive of the systems of oppression we face. We will block their doorways and their ports, interrupt their forums, and obstruct the systems of production and consumption they depend on. We will do it until they will have no choice but to disappear.

And then Spring will come.





Astra Taylor

OCCUPY & SPACE

Even before Liberty Plaza was raided many of us were asking what was next for Occupy Wall Street. The movement, we said, was about more than holding a space, even one in the heart of Manhattan's financial district. Occupation, I often heard, was a means, not an end, a tactic, not a target. The goal, from the beginning, was to do more than build an outdoor urban commune supported by donations solicited over the Internet. We wanted to discomfit the one percent, to interrupt their good times and impact their pocketbooks—or overthrow them entirely.

The dual threat of eviction and inclement weather meant next steps were never far from people's minds. The camp can't last forever, we'd say knowingly, while friends nodded in agreement. And yet, when the raid actually happened—when Bloomberg sent one thousand police officers dressed in riot gear, and paramilitary helicopters hovered overhead, when the entire encampment was hauled off to the garbage dump and half-asleep occupiers were dragged to jail—it was a shock. Circling the police barricades that night many of the faces I passed in the street looked stunned; some individuals crumpled on the sidewalk and wept. The loss of Liberty Plaza was experienced as just that—a real loss, a possibly profound one. By dawn photos began to circulate of the park, freshly power-washed, empty and gleaming, almost as though we had never been there, though the police ringing the periphery and the newly installed private security guards gave us away.

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No one can really say what unique coincidence of events and factors caused OWS to break into mainstream consciousness when so many well-intentioned and smartly planned protests with similar messages

fell flat in the months leading up to it, but certainly the encampments were crucial (crucial though not sufficient, since one protest that took place shortly before OWS actually involved camping). By taking space and holding it OWS has captivated America like no protest movement in recent memory. Yet the crackdowns on occupations across the country have shown it will be difficult, if not impossible, to maintain these bastions of resistance moving forward: We are simply outnumbered, outfunded, and outgunned. While some groups, like Occupy Oakland, have heroically attempted to reclaim the space from which they were ousted, they have been rebuffed each time by overwhelming force. (And there have been more wily kinds of subversion, too: At Oscar Grant Plaza, the original site of the Oakland camp, the authorities have reportedly kept the sprinklers on, turning the lawn into a soggy mess unfit for sleeping.) Here in New York, though the raid on Liberty Plaza was the moment we had all been waiting for, we were still caught off guard. Most of us had no ready or clear answer to the question of how to move forward without the park. It turned out, though, that a small group had been secretly devising a plan to occupy a second space. They jumped into action, weaving through the crowd, instructing everyone to meet at Canal Street and 6th Avenue. A few hours later a couple hundred people amassed at a site called Duarte Square, a giant empty lot not far from the entrance to the Holland Tunnel owned by Trinity Church. Activists cut a hole in the fence surrounding the space and moved in, carrying large yellow signs, some attached to basic wooden frames alluding to shelter. OCCUPY. LIBERATE. The church had been, and still claims to be, supportive of OWS, offering office and meeting space and bathroom access to occupiers before and after the raid, but they did not appreciate the sudden invasion of their property. By noon the police had been called and clergy members watched, impassive, as protesters were beaten and dragged away.

Since that morning Duarte Square has become a flashpoint of sorts, the quixotic focus of one of OWS's most disciplined organizing campaigns. On the night of November 20th I joined a candlelight procession following a small fleet of illuminated tents stenciled with the movement's new slogan: "You cannot evict an idea whose time has come." Those tents, carried high on sticks, playfully reminded everyone we passed that Occupy was not over. Waiters smoking near staff entrances cheered us on as we paraded by, drivers honked their support, and an angry woman outside a bar made the "loser" signal at us, her eyes locking briefly with

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mine. The march arrived at Duarte Square, where we covered long sheets of paper with pleas directed at church officials, and I felt conflicted. I have no doubt the space could be put to better use by the movement (right now it's waiting to be developed into a 429 foot tall "residential tower"), but there was something odd about our appeals for sanctuary. If, by some miracle, the church granted us permission to stay there, would it even be an occupation?

In the weeks that have followed Trinity Church has not budged, while a core group of organizers show no signs of relenting in their efforts to take the space, promising another attempt to "liberate" Duarte Square on December 17th, soon after this gazette goes to press. They imagine a new kind of occupation, better organized, more cohesive, and in some ways more exclusive, than the one at Liberty Plaza, and there is much to admire about their vision. In pursuit of it they have circulated petitions, solicited op-eds, and rallied faith leaders to their cause, consistently highlighting the contradictions between Trinity Church's scriptural duties and its status as New York City's third largest landholder. "In terms of them being a real estate company, their stance makes sense," the Reverend at Church of the Ascension in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, told the press. "In terms of them being a church, it makes no sense. The question is, where are their obligations?" Raising the stakes, a group of three young men, former occupiers, declared a hunger strike demanding access to the vacant lot, which they sat down next to. The church quickly had them arrested for trespassing and, when they returned, arrested them again, underscoring the congregation's inflexibility on the issue. Meanwhile, many movement sympathizers looked on in confusion. Given the various elements and issues at play—the eviction from Liberty Plaza, the lack of open space in which to peacefully protest in our city, the inequities of property ownership, the church's ostensible sympathy towards OWS, the presence of hunger strikers, and the entreaties to religious figures who were also ruthless real estate moguls—the thread was getting hard to follow. Sill I signed the group's latest petition, not wanting to lose faith.

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So far, in New York at least, energy for protest has not waned. The movement can appear anywhere at any time. There are inventive demonstrations every day, too many for any one person to keep up with, and more in the works. Yet attempts to occupy and hold space beyond Liberty Plaza have missed the mark more than they have hit it, from the ridiculous and ridiculed takeover of the non-profit gallery Artists Space to the failed occupation of a student center at the New School, which initially had enormous promise yet quickly devolved despite the fact the building was secure thanks to support from sympathetic faculty and administrators.



Without a doubt, the most successful attempt to expand the concept of occupation took place on December 6th during a national day of action called "Occupy Our Homes," an attempt to refocus attention and outrage on the havoc wrecked by the mortgage crisis—a crisis experts say is only half over (around 6 million homes have been seized since 2007, and over the next four years an estimated 8 million more are predicted go into foreclosure). In Chicago, a homeless woman and her baby moved into a foreclosed home with the blessing of the previous owner and the help of more than forty supporters; in Atlanta, protesters made an appearance at foreclosure auctions in three counties; in Denver, activists collected garbage from abandoned properties and delivered it to the mayor; in Oakland, a mother of three reclaimed the townhouse she lost after becoming unemployed while another group held a barbeque at a property owned by Fannie Mae. "To occupy a house owned by Bank of America is to occupy Wall Street," one activist told me, explaining the underlying logic. "We are literally occupying Wall Street in our own communities."

In New York, Occupy worked with a variety of community organizations and allies to host a foreclosure tour and coordinate the re-occupation and renovation of a vacant bank-owned property. When we reached our final destination, a small house at 702 Vermont Street in Brooklyn, the new residents, a previously homeless family of four, were already inside, along with a veritable army of activists coordinating the event and scheduling rotating teams to guard against eviction. Tasha Glasgow, the mother, was almost too shy to speak, but managed to express her sincere thanks to everyone assembled. Alfredo Carrasquillo, the father of her two children, including a 9-year old daughter who is severely autistic, held back emotion as he addressed the crowd, making sure to acknowledge the NYPD who dotted the sidewalks and could be seen on the roofs of nearby buildings. "I'm just hoping they don't wake me up in my bed at 2 am," he joked. As of this writing, almost a week later, the NYPD has not made any arrests at the house, though they have repeatedly intimidated the people staying there. The neighbors, in contrast, have welcomed the occupiers with open arms, inviting them over for tea and to baby showers held on the block. One woman, who lives a few doors down, said they could use her kitchen a few nights a week since the utilities in the occupied house aren't hooked up.

Not only does the occupation of abandoned foreclosed homes connect the dots between Wall Street and Main Street, it can also lead to swift and tangible victories, something movements desperately need for momentum to be maintained. The banks, it seems, are softer targets than one might expect because so many cases are rife with legal irregularities and outright criminality. It's not uncommon for customers to be misled, crucial paperwork lost and documents robo-signed. While the mortgage crisis involved credit default swaps and securities and other complex



OWS PORTRAITS BY MATTHEW CONNORS

financial instruments, one thing that clued investigators in to the systemic fraud now known to have taken place at Countrywide (right before it merged with Bank Of America) were the extra Wite-Out dispensers on brokers' desks, the tool of choice for low-fi chicanery: signatures were forged, paperwork faked, and numbers fudged, leaving countless people with subprime mortgages when they qualified for better ones. This duplicity is why banks often change their tune when threatened with serious scrutiny; they count on cases to go uncontested, as the vast majority do, because they often lose if actually taken to court. In Rochester, one bank called off an eviction when they got wind that a protest—a blockade and a press conference—was being planned.

It's interesting, given the glowing media coverage Occupy Our Homes received, that the action—billed as Occupy's big leap forward—was not exactly innovative. Take Back The Land, which started in Miami, has been rehousing people in foreclosed properties since the mortgage crisis began. Going further back, the same techniques and rhetoric can be traced to the squatters campaigns that took off in New York City in the late '70s (indeed, some of the squatting pioneers are now mentoring a new generation of activists) and the largely forgotten poor people's movements of the late eighties and nineties. On May 1st, 1990, in an effort remarkably similar to Occupy Our Homes, homeless activists in eight cities reclaimed dozens of government owned properties, many of which they wrested control of for good. Occupy, in other words, is not breaking new ground, but bringing public attention to the kind of civil disobedience that typically goes under the radar.

But what's clear—and terrifying—looking back on the occupation efforts of decades past, is that the potential base of support today is far broader than previous generations of activists could have ever dreamed. With one in five homes facing foreclosure and filings showing no sign of slowing down in the next few years, the number of people touched by the mortgage crisis—whether because they have lost their homes or because their homes are now underwater—truly boggles the mind.

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Occupy Wall Street's battle is nothing compared to what early civil rights advocates faced. Our predecessors had to convince their opponents to radically shift their worldview and abandon deeply held prejudices. Today, in contrast, public sentiment on economic issues broadly aligns with Occupy Wall Street. Americans are angry at the banks; they are angry about inequality; they are angry at politicians' servility to corporate interests. The challenge, then, is convincing people that their anger is worth acting on, that something can be done. The path forward isn't obvious. It's difficult to organize against something as abstract as finance capital. How do you occupy something that is everywhere and nowhere? Organizing around the mortgage crisis is a good step, for not only does it link seemingly arcane issues, like deregulation, to daily life and connect grassroots direct action to the action of the legislative variety (like the state attorney generals who are stepping up their inquiries into illegal home seizures and other mortgage misdeeds), it also promises small successes along the way, like offering shelter to a family that would otherwise be on the street. But not everyone is a struggling homeowner or already homeless; not everyone will identify with this particular struggle enough to join it.

Indeed, one problem facing many of Occupy's early adopters is that, given high rates of student debt and unemployment, they may never have a chance to achieve that version of the American dream. As one of the big yellow signs at Duarte Square put it the morning after the eviction of Liberty Plaza: "I will never own a home in my life." For these people questions of space and where and how to occupy take a different shape. For individuals who are not part of a student body, or rooted in neighborhood, or part of a union, the need, first of all, is to make a community from scratch, to cohere with a group under a common identity and find common cause. A community in formation was part of what the experiment at Liberty Plaza promised. Liberty Plaza was a space to be together, a space to struggle in and over—a space that grounded and oriented the movement, however imperfectly at times.

Space matters for Occupy. But when we seize it—whether it's the sidewalk, the street, a park, a plaza, a port, a house, or a workplace—we must also claim the moral high ground so that others can be enticed to come and join us there. Occupy Our Homes made clear the connections between the domestic sphere and the financial sector: The occupation of abandoned bank-owned properties is actually a reclamation, a taking back of that which has been taken away, a recouping of something already paid for through other means (by unfairly ballooning monthly payments and the still-indeterminate government bail out, for example). The focus on Duarte Square, I fear, fails to draw the same kind of obvious unswerving link to the urgent issues that Occupy Wall Street emerged to address. At a direct action meeting a few weeks ago a young man spoke up. "We just need to occupy something," he said impatiently. "Anything!" But if Occupy Wall Street takes the wrong space—or fails to clearly articulate the reasons why it is taking the right one—it may end up as lost as if it had none at all.

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