

THE OCCUPY WALL STREET JOURNAL

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ISSUE 3

Love Letter to Liberty Square

PEOPLE STEP UP Bloomberg backs down

5:00 AM FRIDAY—In the day-breaking hours of a long night spent scrubbing and brushing and gardening and packing, a stalwart girl named Julia meticulously swept the tiniest specks from the ground into a dust pan, retracing her steps through Liberty Square again and again.

Occupiers carried boxes to a storage space around the block, and personal stuff was rolled carefully into those ever-present blue tarps, names and phone numbers attached. Preparation of a different sort happened, too: some stayed put and refused to pack up anything.

Two young women, in a subtle and endearing form of protest, sat curled up in blue plastic bins waiting to be carried away. Three hundred people occupied the square.

The day before, Mayor Michael Bloomberg had announced that at 7 a.m., the NYPD would enforce a request by Brookfield Office Properties to clear the park for cleaning. The occupiers, Bloomberg said, would be allowed to return, but many worried that this was a tactic devised to evict the occupation.

A rush of activity commenced. A Facebook page, “Emergency Action: Defend Occupy Wall Street,” was forwarded to tens of thousands. Twitter lit up. Emails, text messages and phone calls spread the word. The direct action working group got to it. Organizations everywhere issued statements of support and a unified call for action.

And Occupy Wall Street organizers put out the most urgent call for donations yet: cleaning supplies.

5:30 AM—A line stretched half-way through the park after a mic-checked announcement: coffee had arrived. Following an earlier downpour, clothes were hung to dry on police barricades and twine strung between honey locust trees. An olive-dressed couple wafted sage along the perimeter and a premonitory buoy bell rung now and then from somewhere too near to be on water. Five hundred people occupied the square.

Mic check: “I need (“I need”) volunteers (“volunteers”) to move this laundry (“to move this laundry”) over there! (“over there!”) Thank you!” Two people splashed leaf-pile-style onto the heap before helping to take it away. Teams of coordinated volunteers again push-broomed water across granite that was as clean as it had ever been. The People’s

Library was packed into plastic bins and stacked together under a huge blue turtle-shell assembly of tarps. The usual vibrant sprawl of stuff was being consolidated, fortified.

Armaments over shoulder, two occupiers patrolled the north sidewalk. “Preseeent - mops! March!” Three sentries were on the lookout: a Superman, a Captain America and a Santa Claus. The Sauron-eye of the NYPD mobile observation tower on the northwest corner was, as ever, mostly ignored.

A bottle hurled at a congregation of uniformed and plain-clothed cops across Liberty Street fell ten feet short; they shuffled indoors. An early edition of the Daily News was passed from person to person. The headline: “SHOWDOWN”

6:15 AM—The crowd tripled in ten minutes to well over a thousand. Accredited photographers convened at the trash can bouquet of donated plastic brooms and snapped action shots of occupiers cleaning, now, as performance. On the south side of the square, half a dozen television vans lined up, doors open, video monitors abuzz. Liberty Square neared, then exceeded, capacity.

Mic check: “This special assembly... is now... in session!” Crazy cheers and wiggly fingers from all. “This session is being called for in preparation for the notice that we received, which we know is a pretext, to stop this movement, to silence your voices.” The people’s mic relayed the message in four concentric waves. “We have two agenda items. The first is briefing from direct action.”

From the direct action working group: “We will hold no less than two-thirds of our park at all times. Direct action will be coordinating two lines of non-violent resistance that divide the park in thirds.” When it was asked who in the crowd was willing to risk arrest, half put their arms in the air without hesitation. More applause. “Everyone can and should have a role in defending our community.”

The assembly went on until a woman carrying a white sheet of paper scrambled toward the facilitators. The people’s mic stopped. Faces wore confusion. Near the center: one hug, then five more.

“We have just received notice that Brookfield Properties has withdrawn

Continued on center spread



OCCUPATION OF TIMES SQUARE: October 15 international day of action brings hundreds of cities around the world into motion. PHOTO: Stephen O’Byrne

OCCUPY YOUR MIND THE PEOPLE’S LIBRARY

Howard Zinn is here. Dominick Dunne and Tom Wolfe, too. Ernest Hemingway and Barbara Ehrenreich and Dr. Who and Beowulf: All here, and all free. Barnes & Noble may be endangered and the Borders across the street closed months ago, but The People’s Library at Liberty Square is open for business and thriving.

That a lending library would spring up fully operational on day one of an occupation makes sense when you consider that the exchange of ideas is paramount here, at a new crossroads of the world. Just as occupiers young and old mingle with Africans, Jews, Algonquins and Latinas, de Tocqueville rubs elbows with Nicholas Evans and Noam Chomsky.

Mandy Henk, 32, saw *Adbusters’* call to occupy Wall Street and drove in from Greencastle, Indiana, on her fall break to work in the library. A librarian at DePaul University, she’d been waiting for “an actual movement” for years when she saw a photo of the library and a poster beside it that read: “Things the library needs: Librarians.”

“And here I am,” she said cheerfully as she shelved books into clear plastic bins, dozens of which line the northeastern edge of Liberty Square. Henk isn’t surprised that a library was erected so quickly. “Anytime you have a movement like this, people are going to bring books to it. People are going to have information needs. And historically, the printed word has played an extraordi-



LIBRARIES, LIKE NEWSPAPERS, ARE PILLARS OF A DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITY

narily important role.”

Young readers can find a wealth of age-appropriate material too, like A.A. Milne’s “When We Were Very Young,” “Oliver Twist” and “The Hobbit,” as well as more offbeat titles like “Tales For Little Rebels.”

Another volunteer librarian, Steve Syrek, 33, is earning his master’s degree in English at Rutgers University. He has commuted to Liberty Square from his Washington Heights apartment every day since Octo-

ber 7. A sign he made for the library was snapped up by the Smithsonian Institution: “Literacy, Legitimacy and Moral Authority: The People’s Library,” it read.

“More people arrived, more books appeared, and it’s just been growing ever since,” Syrek said. “And then everyone in New York City just *has* to clean out their basement,” he quipped, which would explain how inventory has ballooned to nearly 1,800. Authors like Naomi Klein, Eve Ensler and Katrina

vanden Heuvel have donated signed editions, and vanden Heuvel has pledged hundreds of copies of *The Nation*, past and present.

As a result of the influx, the library has become something of a clearing house for books. “People are shipping us stuff from all over the country and we just give them out,” Syrek said. “We don’t need them to be returned.”

Volunteers log each book on LibraryThing, an online cataloging site, by scanning the ISBN number using an iPhone app. This just in: “Wicked,” “Eat Pray Love” and “Get Rich Cheating: The Crooked Path to Easy Street.” A blog and a Facebook page chronicle visits from literary luminaries and the formation of libraries at Occupy sites across the country.

On a recent Tuesday, a few people sat on the granite benches that face the bookshelves, so absorbed in their reading that they didn’t look up, despite the din around them. Henk, for one, appreciates the role of escapism, especially when you consider the weighty issues that drew everyone to Liberty Square.

“Stories are incredibly important for helping people to understand the world,” she said. “And so this is a place to come to understand the world.”

BY JENNIFER SACKS



A New World

What it is, the demand the 1% can't comprehend, is us. It is the individuals and villages, the cities and peoples across the world who are seeing each other on the far side of appeals and petition. It is the world we are becoming.

Establishment polls confirm what everyone in the street already knows: a clear majority of New Yorkers, three of every four, support the occupation and get the "demand" in their gut. The epicenter of the October 15 international day of action was Times Square, barricaded by police insistent to demonstrate their control. But our town is only one center. The world is round.

In the south, thousands streamed onto the avenues of Buenos Aires and Santiago. In Brazil, Peru and Colombia, in more than 20 cities of Mexico and all through our Americas, people came out. There was noise. More like a song.

In the East, demonstrators supporting the occupation emerged on the streets of Hong Kong and Seoul, Manila and Jakarta, Auckland and Melbourne. Days earlier, astonishingly, a solidarity rally in Zhengzhou, China supported the "Great Wall Street Revolution." China has rallied for our human rights. Imagine.

In Africa, protestors gathered in Nairobi and Johannesburg. The heroes of Tahrir Square in Cairo have returned to battle the military regime that did not follow Mubarak into infamy.

Germany and Greece, ruled by the same banks, rose up with Spain and a lost generation of Europeans to claim a future from the dust of faded empire. Everywhere the lack of demands let us see each other clearly. Across the world, as if for the first time.

And in our own backyard, in thousands of backyards, from Augusta and Jackson, Springfield and Sioux Falls, Vegas and Santa Rosa and Green Bay: Americans celebrated the occupation in its infancy. Jobs with dignity. Housing fit for families. Education. Health care. Pensions. The very air we breathe. What can those who want democracy demand from the king, except his crown? Regime change is in the air. America is looking at itself, it's place in the world and who we are to be.

This is not a demonstration. It's participation. Creation. This is a movement where we can be ourselves, together. In Liberty Square. In New York City. In America. A new world.

BY JED BRANDT AND MICHAEL LEVITIN



UNAFRAID: Despite 700+ arrests on the Brooklyn Bridge on Oct. 1, crowds surged in the following days. PHOTO: Adrian Kinloch

Rule of law vs. the forces of order

Occupy Wall Street, with its defiant style of non-violent protest, has consistently clashed with the NYPD's obsession with order maintenance, resulting in hundreds of mostly unnecessary arrests and a significant infringement on the basic rights of free speech and assembly.

Prior to the massive protests at the WTO in Seattle, protest policing in the U.S. was a largely casual affair punctuated with isolated outbursts of police misconduct. After Seattle, police departments embarked on a major rethinking of how to handle increasingly large and militant protests and, most importantly, how to handle the growing use of large

coordinated direct actions. Without too much concern for First Amendment rights, police departments have tended to take one of two approaches and sometimes a bit of both.

The first is the strategic repression of direct action movements in particular. Beginning with the Miami police's aggressive response to the FTAA protests in 2003, many departments resorted to using surveillance, agents provocateurs and negative publicity before an event, followed by massive deployments, "less lethal" weaponry and restriction on protest permits, including the creation of isolated "protest pits."

Similar problems emerged in 2004, during the Republican

National Convention in New York City. Permits were denied to use Central Park and other traditional protest locations; barricades were used extensively at peaceful, permitted demonstrations; and over a thousand people were preemptively arrested, with all the charges eventually dropped by the Manhattan DA.

The other approach has been to attempt to micromanage demonstrations in such a way that dissent becomes a tightly controlled and dispiriting experience. This is accomplished through the use of large numbers of officers, extensive restrictions on access to demonstrations through choke points, penning in and subdividing crowds

with barricades, heavily restricting march permits, and making multiple arrests, sometimes using excessive force for minor violations.

This latter strategy is especially common in New York City, which has an almost limitless supply of police officers (upwards of 30,000) to use for controlling crowds. During the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations, we have seen a gross overreaction to peaceful demonstrators engaging in minor violations of the law, such as using a megaphone, writing on the sidewalk with chalk, marching in the street (and across the Brooklyn Bridge), standing in line at a bank to close an account, and occupying a public park past closing hours.

The effect of this has been a low-level criminalization of dissent that serves only a limited legitimate public safety function. The important thing to keep in mind here is that while some protests have been illegal and disruptive, they have been consistently nonviolent in character. This raises the question of whether the tight and expensive control of these demonstrations is an unwarranted interference in people's right to free expression that exceeds any legal objective.

BY ALEX S. VITALE



PHOTO: Vanessa Bahmani

Continued from front page

its—" The rest was indiscernible over cheers, yells, whoops, howls, banging drums, clapping hands, and the sight of thousands of people hugging strangers.

7:00 AM—The sun rose over Liberty Square, and it was still very, very loud.

It matters that the occupiers cleaned like gangbusters. It matters that it was always pretty clean to

begin with. It matters that so many organizations of all stripes stepped up and showed up. It matters that elected officials called in their support. It matters that thousands woke up early and rallied to defend the occupation.

The mayor's office and Brookfield Properties and the NYPD engaged in machinations behind closed doors. That matters too. The three aligned themselves with an ultimatum against the occupation. That matters more.

But this very simple thing matters most: They backed down. The ostensible owners of a very precious

space and the captain of the captains of New York finance and this country's most robustly armed police force joined forces in a showdown against the young at heart, and they blinked first. For one crazy-important moment we held the place that has become, for many different people and in many different ways, our home. And the very big, very loud sunrise party that followed was a love note to a democratic moment at Liberty Square.

BY RIZZO



CLEAN SWEEP: On Oct. 13, Mayor Bloomberg announced plans to "clean" Liberty Square, pushing occupiers out of the park. Thousands flocked to clean it themselves. Brooms, mops and others supplies were donated. And in the morning, Bloomberg backed down. PHOTO: Mike Fleshman



TO THE VILLAGE: With a large college and high school student contingent, occupiers from all over the city have repeatedly marched to Washington Square where at least two general assemblies have convened. PHOTO: Stephen O'Byrne

NYPD: Serving and protecting.



UNAFRAID: A volunteer sets the open meeting schedule for working groups in Liberty Square. PHOTO: Mike Fleshman

OCCUPATION IS PARTICIPATION

Among the remarkable developments at Liberty Square have been the Working Groups, created by occupiers to forward the movement's goals. In these groups ideas are exchanged, strategies are collectively shaped and the future of the occupation is being written. Here are dispatches from a few...

OUTREACH

Since the best place to reach the 99% is on the subway—where 10 million New York commuters travel daily—Occupy Subways is turning New York City's underground into a democratic platform. Elsewhere in the city, Outreach has helped general assemblies convene in the Bronx, Harlem and Brooklyn. Efforts will culminate in a day of service bringing Occupy Wall Street supporters into communities as volunteers.

MEGICAL

Staffed 24 hours a day with 15 to 20 volunteers, the group ranges from nurses and doctors to street medics, herbalists, chiropractors, EMTs and acupuncturists. No one is turned away. "We practice the ethics of medicine," said Pauly, 27, "meaning everyone will be treated no matter if they're a police officer, active drug user or wearing a suit and tie. We run a city within a city."

FACILITATION

Holding daily training sessions to assist occupiers navigating the choppy waters of public debate, the group "uses direct democracy and the facilitation process coupled with some inclusive radical concepts," said Craig Stephens, 24. "Mediation in large groups is very hard but it's very rewarding."

FOOD

The Food group, which began on Day 1 of the occupation, has received hundreds of donations from local farmers to sympathizers in Europe and Asia. "Yesterday we had a thousand people at dinner alone," said

Laura Gottesdiener, 24, and "we're serving more than two thousand meals per day. Something we're trying to fight against is the notion that, in this country, your socioeconomic status determines your health." All are welcome and all are fed.

PEOPLE OF COLOR

Two weeks into the occupation, POC emerged in an effort to reach out to those who felt alienated by the movement. "Communities of color have historically been at the bottom of the 99%," said Sharon, 23. "We wanted to make Occupy Wall Street more diverse in leadership, voice, perspective and participation, and a safer space for marginalized communities." With about 250 members, it operates as a caucus with a variety of subcommittees that engage with other working groups.

COMFORT

Helping people acclimate to the realities of living and sleeping in a park, the group has distributed hundreds of donated blankets, sleeping bags, jackets and fresh pairs of socks. "We're here for people's comfort," said Christine Rucker, 22, who has been occupying since week two. "If people forgot something, we're here to provide those things. We're family."

DESIGN

Perhaps the most visible feature of Occupy Wall Street are the signs held up by occupiers conveying messages that get beamed around the world. "Graphic design is sometimes called 'communication art,'" said Emily Schuch, 21. "I hope this group can help foster communication between working groups and especially help Occupy Wall Street communicate to the world at large." Working in print, web media and graphics, members of the design group have produced posters, infographics, banners, stickers, buttons...and anything else you can name.

BY ALLISON

So real it hurts: building a new republic

On a Thursday night when I showed up at Occupy Wall Street from a community meeting with some South Asian friends, we were handed a sheet of paper with a working draft of the Declaration of the Occupation.

The night before, I'd heard the Declaration read aloud at the General Assembly and turned to my friend, Sonny, after noting the line that hit me in the stomach: "As one people, formerly divided by the color of our skin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or lack thereof, political party and cultural background..." Initially we'd shrugged it off as a rhetorical flourish. Then we realized this was about to become *the* Declaration of the movement, sent out to the world as a defining document of the occupation. The proposed text ignored people from countries that have been colonized and communities right here where democratic participation is anything but a given. It was not something I could get

behind. But I couldn't walk away from the document, or from this movement, either.

So our radical South Asian contingent stood up. My friend Hena addressed the crowd of hundreds with our concern, and we were told to send an email that could deal with it later. Hena persisted, and again the facilitators at the General Assembly tried to bypass our grievance and push it off until later. They warned us that to "block" the Declaration was a serious act. We knew it was a serious act. And that is why we did it.

It is intimidating to speak in front of hundreds of people, but it is even more intense to speak in front of hundreds of people with whom you feel aligned—and to whom you are saying something that they don't necessarily want to hear. We told the General Assembly that we wanted a small change made to the language, but that this change represented a larger ethical concern. To erase a history of oppression in this founding document, we

said, was not something that we could allow to happen. We proposed that they cut out the line, and after minutes of debate they accepted our change. We withdrew our block. My friend Sonny looked me in the eye and said, "You did good." I had never needed to hear those words as much as I needed to hear them then.

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

In that small circle following the assembly we did a crash course on white privilege, structural racism and oppression. We did a course on history and the Declaration of Independence and colonialism and slavery. It was real. It was hard. It hurt. But people listened. Sitting there on a street corner in the Financial District at 11:30 p.m., talking with 20 mostly white men, it all felt worth it. Explaining the way that women of color like me experience the world—and the power relations, inequalities and oppressions that govern that world—felt for me like a victory.

A victory not only for myself and others who feel the way I do, but a victory for the movement. As I biked home that night over the Brooklyn Bridge, the world seemed somehow, just a little bit more, in that moment, to be mine. It seemed somehow like the world that could be all of ours.

BY MANISSA MCCLEAVE MAHARAWAL

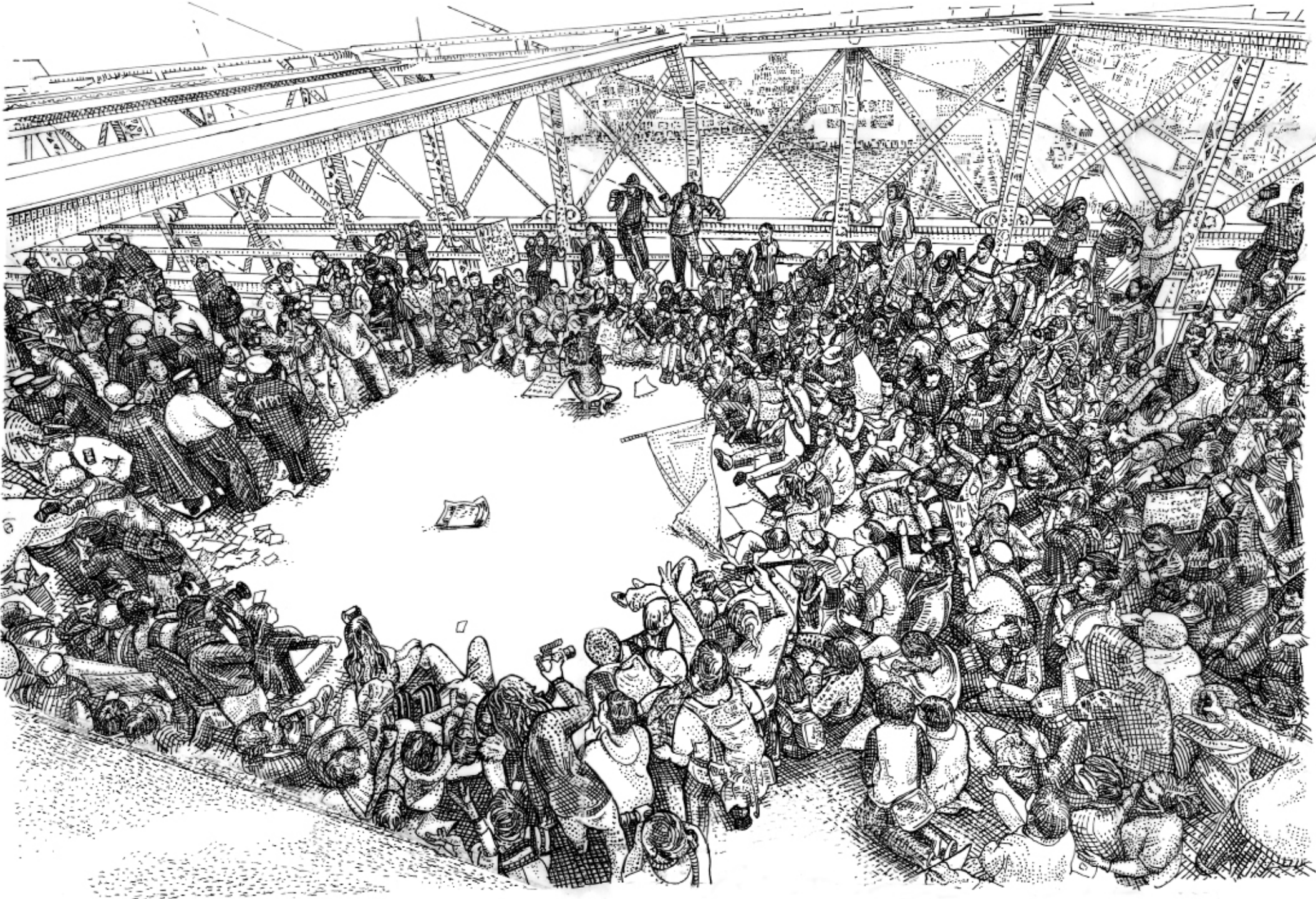


ILLUSTRATION: Beth Whitney

Enacting the Impossible ON CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

On August 2, at the very first meeting of what was to become Occupy Wall Street, about a dozen people sat in a circle in Bowling Green. The self-appointed "process committee" for a social movement we merely hoped would someday exist, contemplated a momentous decision. Our dream was to create a New York General Assembly: the model for democratic assemblies we hoped to see spring up across America. But how would those assemblies actually operate?

The anarchists in the circle made what seemed, at the time, an insanely ambitious proposal. Why not let them operate exactly like this committee: by consensus.

It was, in the least, a wild gamble, because as far as any of us knew, no one had ever managed to pull off something like this before. Consensus process had been successfully used in spokes-councils—groups of activists organized into separate affinity groups, each represented by a single "spoke"—but never in mass assemblies like the one anticipated

in New York City. Even the General Assemblies in Greece and Spain had not attempted it. But consensus was the approach that most accorded with our principles. So we took the leap.

Three months later, hundreds of assemblies, big and small, now operate by consensus across America. Decisions are made democratically, without voting, by general assent. According to conventional wisdom this shouldn't be possible, but it is happening—in much the same way that other inexplicable phenomena like love, revolution, or life itself (from the perspective of, say, particle physics) happen.

The direct democratic process adopted by Occupy Wall Street has deep roots in American radical history. It was widely employed in the civil rights movement and by the Students for a Democratic Society. But its current form has developed from within movements like feminism and even spiritual traditions (both Quaker and Native American) as much as from within anarchism itself. The reason

direct, consensus-based democracy has been so firmly embraced by and identified with anarchism is because it embodies what is perhaps anarchism's most fundamental principle: that in the same way human beings treated like children will tend to act like children, the way to encourage human beings to act like mature and responsible adults is to treat them as if they already are.

Consensus is not a unanimous voting system; a "block" is not a No vote, but a veto. Think of it as the intervention of a High Court that declares a proposal to be in violation of fundamental ethical principles—except in this case the judge's robes belong to anyone with the courage to throw them on. That participants know they can instantly stop a deliberation dead in its tracks if they feel it a matter of principle, not only means they rarely do it. It also means that a compromise on minor points becomes easier; the process toward creative synthesis is really the essence of the thing. In the end, it matters less how a final decision is reached—by a call for blocks

or a majority show hands—provided everyone was able to play a part in helping to shape and reshape it.

We may never be able to prove, through logic, that direct democracy, freedom and a society based on principles of human solidarity are possible. We can only demonstrate it through action. In parks and squares across America, people have begun to witness it as they have started to participate. Americans grow up being taught that freedom and democracy are our ultimate values, and that our love of freedom and democracy is what defines us as a people—even as, in subtle but constant ways, we're taught that genuine freedom and democracy can never truly exist.

The moment we realize the fallacy of this teaching, we begin to ask: how many other "impossible" things might we pull off? And it is there, it is here, that we begin enacting the impossible.

BY DAVID GRAEBER

8 THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

1 ATTEND A GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- 7–9 pm daily at Broadway and Liberty St., NYC (Liberty Square)
- Occupation is participation. All are welcome!

2 JOIN A WORKING GROUP

- Visit nycga.net, a social network for social change.
- Follow discussions and work being done on the ground at Liberty Square.
- Create an account to virtually "join" working groups.
- Connect and come down to the park.

3 OCCUPY!

- Bring food, blankets, bedding, rain gear, instruments and your friends.

4 SPREAD THE WORD

- Twitter: [#occupywallstreet](https://twitter.com/occupywallstreet) [#occupytogether](https://twitter.com/occupytogether) [#ows](https://twitter.com/ows)
- Facebook: [OccupyWallStreet](https://www.facebook.com/occupywallstreet)
- Download, print, display, and share flyers: nycga.net/resources

5 DONATE

- Visit nycga.net/donate
- Make a tax-deductible donation to the New York City General Assembly.
- You can also mail a check or money order to: Alliance for Global Justice, 1247 "E" Street, SE Washington, DC, 20003. Please indicate "Occupy Wall Street" in the memo line. Or call 202 544 9355 to make a telephone donation.
- On Twitter: [#needsoftheoccupiers](https://twitter.com/needsoftheoccupiers)
- If you are in the area come by and drop off prepared food, non-perishable food (vegan and gluten free so anyone can eat it), sweatshirts, sweatpants, socks.
- You can mail packages to us: UPS Store, 118A Fulton St. #205 New York, NY, 10038

6 FOLLOW THE OCCUPATION

- nycga.net
- occupywallst.org
- livestream.com/occupynyc
- livestream.com/globalrevolution
- takethesquare.net
- occupytogether.org
- wearthe99percent.tumblr.com
- scoop.it/occupy-together
- Follow on Twitter: [@occupywallstnyc](https://twitter.com/occupywallstnyc), [@nycsep17](https://twitter.com/nycsep17), [@occupywallst](https://twitter.com/occupywallst)

OCCUPY YOUR LIFE

- Engage others in conversation in your community.
- Send personal letters, phone calls and emails to friends and family.
- Share your thoughts and photographs on social networking sites.
- Occupy your occupation! Whether you clean houses, sit behind a desk, teach in a classroom, work in a kitchen, play an instrument, speak a second language, make videos, walk dogs, anything... your skills are needed at Liberty Square!

8 EDUCATE YOURSELF & OTHERS

The Occupied Wall Street Journal is made possible through dozens of bright and talented people who have volunteered their work. The paper got off the ground thanks to over 1,600 generous donations to a kick-starter.com fundraiser. The Occupied WSJ does not (and could not) represent anyone except its participants. The views of the authors are their own.

We are always on the lookout for people who want to help. Submissions are open and encouraged. Write us a note, ask us a question, or tell us a story at occupymedia@gmail.com

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