

THE OCCUPIED WALL STREET JOURNAL

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MAY DAY

ISSUE 6

VOTE EVERY DAY

A deep democratic moment, something most of us have never seen and scarcely imagined, turned a small park near Wall Street into the center of a global storm. Everybody knows the deck is stacked. But it turns out not everybody is willing to put up with it.

Without asking permission, hundreds converged on the financial district to stop the machine. People convened open assemblies to think out loud together. Kitchens were built and volunteers served hundreds of thousands of meals. Books were borrowed and lent at the People's Library with no need for a card. Nobody did it for the money. Occupy Wall Street changed not just what we *think* is realistic, but what is *actually* possible.

Then the 1% hit back. "If you want to get arrested, we'll accommodate you," is how Mayor Bloomberg announced that the very act of challenging Wall Street would be treated as a crime. "Nobody can hear you when everybody's yelling and screaming and pushing and shoving." Funny stuff.

In school, we were taught that we are free to speak and free to assemble. Now we're told we have "First Amendment Rights Areas" located inside steel barricades. Over the last eight months, nearly 7,000 have been arrested and occupations in dozens of cities have been systematically evicted.

Rosa Luxemburg said, "those who do not move cannot feel their chains." We moved and we felt them. There's an old saying: water beats rock. Put another way: you can't evict an idea whose time has come.

It was never about a park. It's about power.

Moving your money into credit unions takes power away from banks. Planting a garden in the city takes power from agribusiness. Mutual aid takes power from a culture of greed. Democracy is not simply speaking truth to power. It's something we do, that we can't ask for. Something like a rebellion.

The idea is simple and yet it seems far off, like a dream. But this is not a dream. And it's not far off. —*The Editors*

Power & Politics: A BREAKUP STORY

The truth is we are not in control. But that's not the worst of it. We suspect, indeed we know, that no one is in control: no God, no glorious leader, no benevolent dictator, nothing and no one. There's no wizard and no emperor. This is the source, I think, of the massive fear and anxiety that we experience on a daily basis.

Our fear is scattered and diffused. It doesn't have a specific object. One moment, the object of fear could be a hurricane. It could be that your house is robbed, car stolen. You could be diagnosed with a fatal disease. We live with a generalized sense of fear, a feeling that we are not in control and that nothing and no one is in control either.

Why do we have this feeling? Why can't we pinpoint the source of our fear? Why do we have a general feeling of powerlessness?

One reason — not the only reason but one important reason — is the profound separation of politics and power.

Power is the ability to get things done. Politics is the means to get those things done. The location of power and politics was once understood to be the nation-state. This was never the complete truth, particularly for colonized or subjugated peoples, and it was certainly never the full truth of our always-interconnected economic life. But for a period of time, in many countries of the world — the countries that most of us are from — it was a reasonable expectation that the nation-state was the epicenter of the unity of power and politics and that this was how we could get things done.

Democracy is the name for a political regime that believes that power lies with the people. Representative liberal democracy on the Western model (and there are other models, as the past year of Occupy has reminded us) is premised on the idea that we exercise political power through the vote and that these votes would be aggregated by



MAY 1ST

general strike a day without the 99%

POP-UP OCCUPATION

8 am - 2 pm

Bryant Park 5th Ave & 42nd

A family-friendly meet-up in the park with free food, skillshares, teach-ins, and public art.

FREE UNIVERSITY

10 am - 3 pm

Madison Square Park Broadway & 23rd

Educators will hold discussions and informative lectures.

4 PM – UNION SQUARE

5:30 MARCH TO WALL ST.

When we come together, we recognize the common struggles we face and the common interests we have. With this collective power we can begin to build the world we want to see. Another world is possible!

no work no school no shopping no banking no housework

LET FREEDOM SPRING

maydaynyc.org

Elizabeth Knafo & MPA

parties, representatives would be elected, governments would be formed, and these governments would have power to get things done. Our belief was that if we worked politically for a certain group, on the right or the left, then we could win an election, form a government, and have the power to change things.

The fact is that today politics and power have fallen apart in liberal democracy. They are separated, maybe even divorced. We know this. We feel this viscerally.

Democracy at this time in history, even representative liberal democracy, risks being no more than a word, a kind of ideological birdsong. Power has evaporated into supranational spaces. These are the spaces of finance and information platforms. But these

supranational spaces are also those of drug trafficking, human trafficking, illegal immigration, the many boats that cross the Mediterranean, and so on.

We know this. And yet power still feels local. We feel English or Greek or Tunisian, but power has migrated beyond local boundaries. Sovereignty lies elsewhere. It is certainly not people-centered. Politics does not have power. Politics serves power. Whereas power is global or supranational, politics is still local and there is a gap between the two.

So, what do we do?

SPRING TRAINING AT LIBERTY SQUARE: Eight months into direct democracy and fear is still not on the agenda. Learning direct action and consensus decision-making — to keep the pressure on Wall Street. *PHOTO: Jed Brandt*

A NEW DECLARATION

We hold these truths to be self-evident:

That the real, physical world is the source of our own lives, and the lives of others. A weakened planet is less capable of supporting life, human or otherwise. Thus the health of the real world is primary, more important than any social or economic system, because all social or economic systems are dependent upon a living planet. It is self-evident that to value a social system that harms the planet's capacity to support life over life itself is to be out of touch with physical reality.

That any way of life based on the use of nonrenewable resources is by definition not sustainable. If, for example, fewer salmon return every year, eventually there will be none. This means that for a way of life to be sustainable, it must not harm native communities: native prairies, native forests, native fisheries, and so on.

That the real world is interdependent, such that harm done to rivers harms those humans and nonhumans whose lives depend on these rivers, harms forests and prairies and wetlands surrounding these rivers, harms the oceans into which these rivers flow. Harm done to mountains harms the rivers flowing through them. Harm done to oceans harms everyone directly or indirectly connected to them.

That you cannot argue with physics. If you burn carbon-based fuels, this carbon will go into the air, and have effects in the real world.

That no one, no matter how rich or powerful, should be allowed to create poisons for which there is no antidote. That no one, no matter how rich or powerful, should be allowed to create messes that cannot be cleaned up.

That no one, no matter how rich or powerful, should be allowed to drive human cultures or nonhuman species extinct.

That reality trumps all belief systems: what you believe is not nearly so important as what is real.

That corporations are not living beings. They are certainly not human beings. That corporations do not in any real sense exist. They are legal fictions. Limited liability corporations are institutions created explicitly to separate humans from the effects of their actions — making them, by definition, inhuman and inhumane.

We hold it as self-evident, as the Declaration of Independence states, "That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends [Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness], it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it..."

If we as a People fail to rid our communities of destructive institutions, those institutions will destroy our communities. And if we in our communities cannot provide meaningful and nondestructive ways for people to gain food, clothing, and shelter then we must recognize it's not just specific destructive institutions but the entire economic system that is pushing the natural world past breaking points.

Once we've recognized the destructiveness of capitalism and industrial civilization — both of which are based on systematically converting a living planet into dead commodities — we've no choice, unless we wish to sign our own and our children's death warrants, but to fight for all we're worth and in every way we can to overturn it.

BY SIMON CRITCHLEY

BY DERRICK JENSEN



Bringing the heat to Wall Street

Taking advantage of a decade-old New York court ruling that allows sleeping outdoors as political protest, occupiers have sustained a nightly presence on Nassau Street across from the Stock Exchange. Hundreds have camped on the steps and sidewalks and held general assemblies outside Federal Hall. Despite closely adhering to the guidelines in the

court ruling, occupiers have faced arbitrary arrests and punitive action. Authorities have since created a so-called "First Amendment Rights Area," a 200-square-foot barricaded cage on the steps of Federal Hall, 25 people maximum. George Washington was inaugurated just outside its boundary. Liberty Square was an incubator for direct democracy and mutual aid—and for

innovative protest. So it remains. Organizers have held "spring training" every Friday afternoon, with direct action brainstorming and forays through the financial district.

People keep asking: "Where's Occupy Wall Street these days?" They're on Wall Street. Duh.

NO BAIL

Private prisons are a lucrative industry. Harsh drug laws, lengthy sentences and criminalization of immigrants—all of which private prison corporations lobby for—ensure a steady stream of income. In Washington D.C., three out of four black men can expect to serve time behind bars. The majority of convictions are for non-violent offenses; more than half the prison sentences each year are for parole violations, not felony convictions. Many are sent to Rivers Correctional Institution in Winton, North Carolina, a private prison owned by the GEO Group, which is infamous for the torturous conditions in its facilities. A recent Justice Department report on a GEO youth facility found that "youth were sexually preyed upon by staff and all too frequently suffered grievous harm, including death."

The GEO Group recorded \$1.6 billion in total revenue last year and one of its biggest investors is Wells Fargo, which also serves as its broker-trustee. Too few D.C. residents know that Wells Fargo supports the imprisonment of our families, friends, and neighbors. The Criminal (in)Justice Committee of Occupy DC is trying to change that. We are not alone and the campaigns are working. Individuals as well as groups like the United Methodist Church are taking their money out of Wells Fargo—and taking one step toward ending the prison industrial complex.

Wells Fargo used its huge taxpayer bailout to diversify into non-finance industries. The private prison industry is rapidly expanding. Each year brings harsher sentencing laws for immigrants and non-violent offenders. These things are not unrelated.

Visit www.wellsfargoboycott.com for more info.

By MELANIE PINKERT and Occupy DC's CRIMINAL (IN)JUSTICE COMMITTEE

The earth is worth saving

How we scored a victory against big oil

I had the great honor, early in the Wall Street occupation, of speaking through the human mic in lower Manhattan. "Thank God you're here. For a quarter century Wall Street has been occupying the atmosphere, making it impossible for us to do anything about climate change. It's about time we returned the favor."

Of all the outrages people have been protesting, none makes the case about corporate dominance quite as clearly as global warming. Scientists have warned us that pouring carbon into the atmosphere is destroying the planet's climate. We can already see the damage around us—epic flood and drought, Arctic ice disappearing, the ocean that laps at Battery Park turning steadily more acidic. And it will get far worse. A team of Stanford agronomists warned last year that we can expect grain yields to fall 30% or more this century.

And yet does that trouble any oil or coal baron? They continue to pour carbon into the atmosphere; indeed, they go to ever-greater extremes to find it. With the easy stuff mostly gone, they're now literally ripping apart the planet to get more hydrocarbons: fracking the East for gas, ripping off mountaintops for coal seams in Appalachia, drilling miles below the surface in the Gulf. And digging up the vast and filthy tar sands of Canada. About those tar sands: they hold so much carbon that NASA's premier climatologist, James Hansen, warned that tapping them heavily would mean "essentially game over" for the climate.

Any sane corporation, or government, would hear those words and think twice. But Hansen's words did nothing to slow the oil companies, which poured more lobbying money into the fight; emails showed that they effectively corrupted the government agencies charged with reviewing the plan, proving that corporate power doesn't just mean doing bad things, it means purchasing the political cover to keep doing them.

Exxon made more money last year than any company in the history of money—they're the 1% of the 1%. And they use it to defend one of the sweetest deals in business history: they're allowed to pour their main waste product, carbon, into the atmosphere for free.

We're never going to have enough money to slow these guys down. We have to find new currencies. The central mint is wherever people meet and debate and figure out the right mix of spirit, passion and creativity to take on corporate power. And sometimes, of course, we have to spend our bodies.

Last autumn, more than 1,200 of us were arrested outside the White House in protests to demand action from President Obama on the Keystone XL Pipeline. Then, Occupy Wall Street tilted the playing field and the administration understood that we weren't alone; in early November, when we circled the White House, Occupy Portland circled the federal building in Oregon. Our

slogan was, "When you can't occupy, surround!"

And it kind of worked: four days later the White House announced a new environmental review of the project, one that will finish after the November election. It was no final victory—they could still make the wrong call. And even if we block this one pipeline, there's still carbon pouring into the atmosphere from a thousand sources.

If we're going to win the fight, we're going to have to break corporate power, ending forever the idea that corporations are persons, and that money is the same as speech. These victories may seem unlikely. But all across the country people are rewriting the rulebook. We're learning how to fight, learning the depths of nonviolent power. Now it's time to teach corporate America that lesson.

By BILL MCKIBBEN

bucking control

STRIKING STUDENT DEBT

On campuses across the country this year, waves of students are carrying out diverse direct actions to protest cuts to education and the concurrent rise in tuition that is making public education inaccessible, and debts unpayable, for the majority. At Baruch College in New York, students staged a rousing march through Manhattan that culminated in a dramatic occupation of a campus building. At Tufts University in Boston, students held a "kiss-in," which is exactly what it sounds like. "If the banks can make out like bandits," read their statement, "so can we."

In two decades, the cost of attending public university in the U.S. has more than doubled; tuition has grown 5% a year on average since 2006. More students are saddled with greater and greater debt—graduates now owe \$24,000 on average and more than \$1 trillion collectively, surpassing the total U.S. credit card debt.

The response: students have begun burning their Sallie Mae bills in protest and are engaging in sustained demonstrations outside the lending giant's offices in Washington D.C. and elsewhere. In the latest sign that students have had it with our failing education system, many are signing the Student Debt Refusal Pledge, vowing that if one million sign, they will refuse to pay off their debts en masse in an unprecedented student debt strike.

By ANNA LEKAS MILLER

BREAKING THE FOOD CHAIN

You don't see the Cargill brand anywhere. Its name isn't on anything you buy in the supermarket. But Cargill is the sugar in your tea, the beef in your burger and the salt on your road. Literally. If Goldman Sachs is the vampire squid, Cargill is a monster mosquito—sucking the life-blood of local communities, injecting high fructose corn syrup until we are in a dazed stupor.

As a private company, no one knows exactly who sits on its board while it sits in all our cupboards—and writes the very laws that are supposed to regulate it. According to Forbes, Cargill is the largest privately owned company in the country, raking in \$109 billion last year—four times what Apple brought in. Cargill is notoriously secretive and is not accountable to stockholders.

Though its own private hedge fund, Cargill has the power to buy huge tracts of land and commodities, directly influencing the markets where its products are sold. In 2008, when the price of rice, wheat, corn and soy doubled, nearly one billion people went hungry and 150 million slipped into extreme poverty. While millions starved, "Cargill, which controls the cereals market, saw their profits increase by 60%," said the President of the U.N. General Assembly.

Ubiquitous as Cargill may seem, there are other options: visit your local farmers' market, join a Community Supported Agriculture project or a food co-op. And cook!

By ALLISON BURTH

REGULATING WOMEN

"I remember being told I would have to travel to Mexico in a blindfold to get an abortion," said Joan Pleune, a member of the Granny Peace Brigade, former civil rights Freedom Rider and regular fixture at Occupy Wall Street. If you think those days are gone, think again.

In Ohio and Oklahoma, lawmakers have introduced bills that define life either at conception or at the first sign of a heartbeat, meaning anyone who has an abortion could be tried for murder; Arizona's latest bill defines life as beginning at two weeks before conception. And in South Dakota, legislators are considering a bill that would make it legal to murder abortion providers—calling it "justifiable homicide."

It's no coincidence that some of these laws are strikingly similar: most of them are based on "model bills" written by evangelical fronts and right-wing think tanks like the American Legislative Exchange Council for legislators to introduce as their own. These organizations are not required to disclose funding sources—a clear example of corporations and private interests directly impelling democracy.

A government that won't regulate big business seems intent on regulating women. The personal is political when the government can deny medical services to women and infringe on that most basic freedom: when to have children.

By KATHLEEN RUSSELL and MELANIE BUTLER

LAW VS. ORDER

Since Occupy began, lawmakers in Washington and state legislatures have turned their attention to suppressing the constitutional right to assemble, and more specifically to protest, by pushing through several key laws.

The largest in scope, the National Defense Authorization Act, was signed into law by President Obama in December and includes "counter-terrorism" measures that allow the government to arbitrarily detain citizens on U.S. soil or abroad and hold them indefinitely without charges or a trial.

H.R. 347, dubbed the "Trespass Bill," which Obama signed into law in March, criminalizes protest by labeling it a federal felony, punishable by up to 10 years in prison for people caught demonstrating anywhere near a person protected by the Secret Service, whether they are aware of it or not.

By JENNIFER SACKS

It is a condition of wisdom in the archer to be patient. because when the arrow leaves the bow, it returns no more.—Sa'di



GREECE ON THE BRINK: The global 1% isn't backing down, and revolution is now on the agenda.

From protest to power

When I first heard about Occupy Wall Street, I was in Athens, where a parallel kind of movement was beginning to replace the fear and despair caused by a collapsed economy.

The Arab Spring that spread from Tunisia to Egypt had rippled across the Mediterranean. Greece had become the intersection of the Arab Spring and the global financial crisis. Greece's crisis was precipitated by the same forces that wreaked havoc on the American economy. And as in this country, the severe austerity measures ordered by global banks and the politicians of the European Union target those least responsible for the crisis in the first place.

"All the foundations of the social contract are falling apart and are intensively contested by the majority of Greek people," said Yiorgos Tsipras, editor of the weekly *Road of the Left* newspaper. That's not an overstatement. In the last year a million Greeks have left the cities, returning to the countryside and islands of their parents. Young people can't find work. Pensions of people who worked their whole lives have been sucked up by the banks. Hospitals closed without warning. The current government of Greece was appointed by foreign financial institutions and is respected by virtually no one.

When Zuccotti Park became Liberty Square last September, we said "Occupy Everything." In Greece today, such slogans have little to do with utopian longing—"Occupy Everything" is literally unfolding. The relentless austerity program is being actively resisted. People are refusing to pay ever-escalating subway fares and road tolls. Some ram toll booths with their cars, or get out and flag everyone else through. Rebel electricians implement "people's electricity" for those who have been disconnected, for free. Deserted hospitals are occupied and operational. Uprisings have eroded—and in some cases removed outright—each of the ruling political parties, one after another. A popular symbol on flags and walls has become the helicopter, representing the day the government will be forced to flee the country.

Greece's first occupation took Syntagma Square, the central plaza of Athens. Like Occupy, it formed outside the traditional political parties, and even radical subcultures, which had proven incapable of reversing the economic collapse. For two months, Syntagma was liberated ground, before police "cleansed" the square with an ocean of tear gas in the name of "sanitation."

Like us, the Greeks faced confusion after their first occupations were crushed. They required more than planning another rally or more tactics, as important as those are. The Movement of the Squares developed beyond its initial assemblies. They developed strategic imagining and militant new organizations. There has been fresh enthusiasm for revolutionary organization and communist theory. A culture of mutual aid is becoming everyday life. Radicals of many stripes are forming broad alliances with political revolution now squarely on the agenda.

Tsipras again: "In this basically spontaneous struggle, the radicalized people got ahead not only of the bourgeois political parties but also of most Left parties, which are unable to overcome their past parliamentary conceptions, and are not corresponding to the actual situation and needs."

The movements in Greece and the U.S. have this much in common: they have changed not just what we think is realistic, but what is actually possible. And they are showing our common oppressors the way to the helicopter.

By ERIC RIBELLARI

STOP NATO
Chicago May 14-21
natoprotest.org

TEAR GASSED BY THE 1%

One of the biggest clues to understanding the connections among grassroots democratic uprisings across the world may be found by tracking the connections among methods of repression. Tear gas canisters, stun grenades and other less-than-lethal crowd control technologies manufactured by U.S. companies have been used not only against the Occupy movement here but against the Arab Spring pro-democracy uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, Palestine and Yemen, among others.

The U.S. State Department actively promotes the sale of militarized policing products that profit American corporations while assisting in the repression of democracy both at home and abroad.

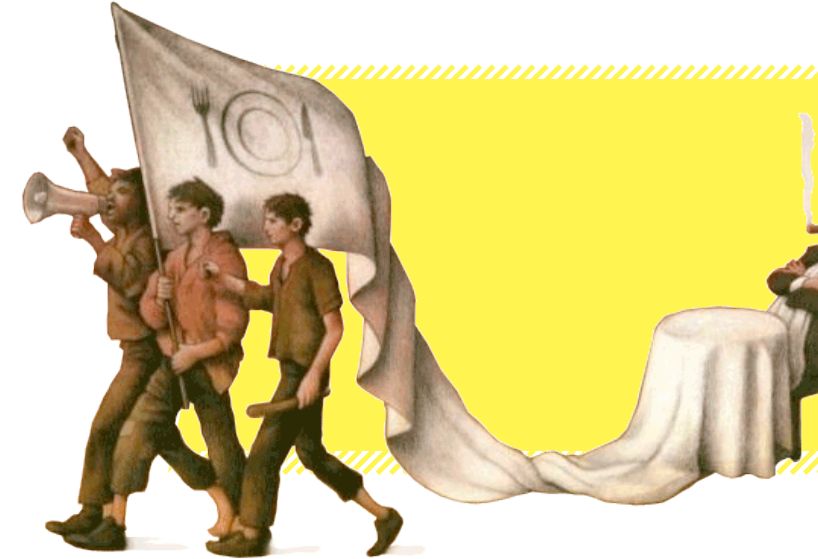
Defense Technology, based in Casper, Wyoming, along with Federal Laboratories in D.C., produces the tear gas that was used from Oakland to the Arab world. Pennsylvania-based NonLethal Technologies is the primary provider of tear gas to the government of Bahrain, where 15-month-long demonstrations persist in the face of imprisonment, torture and murders. And Combined Systems, also headquartered in Pennsylvania and co-owned by the Carlyle Group, supplies gas to governments worldwide—what it calls "the premiere less-lethal line in the industry today."

So just how does tear gas get from American manufacturers to repressive governments overseas? Different ways, but the U.S. government is responsible for authorizing, arranging and even subsidizing the sales.

There have already been several protests at Point Lookout Capital, including a "die-in" organized by the OWS direct action working group. There were also protests at CSI's headquarters on Martin Luther King Day this year.

The next time you see people at home or overseas getting gassed in the street, remember that the 1% is global. The 99% too.

By ALLISON BROWN, Udi PLADOTT and MAIA RAMNATH
OWS GLOBAL JUSTICE WORKING GROUP



NO GOING BACK

#OCCUPIED: REPORTS FROM THE FRONT LINES



Activists across the country have been building relationships with each other and with their communities. Occupy is on the move. The OWSJ compiles reports on our website each Monday. Here are a few highlights from recent months.

FIGHTING BACK

The California State Assembly approved a resolution urging Congress to amend the Constitution to overturn the *Citizens United v. FEC* Supreme Court ruling that has allowed unlimited corporate contributions to election campaigns. Several cities and the state of Vermont have since followed suit. Demonstrators occupied 75 federal courthouses across the country, including the Supreme Court, to demand a 28th constitutional amendment declaring that "corporations are not people and that campaign contributions are not speech."

Several well-known journalists and activists, led by Chris Hedges and Naomi Wolf, filed suit in Manhattan challenging the National Defense Authorization Act's new overreaching provisions on "material sup-

port for terrorism" which would undermine journalists' ability to do their job.

Anthony Bologna, A.K.A. Tony Baloney, the East Coast's premier pepper-spraying cop, is being sued by the unarmed women he assaulted during a demonstration in September in an incident that brought Occupy Wall Street to global prominence.

Thanks in part to **Occupy Madison**, an effort to recall Wisconsin governor Scott Walker—who ended collective bargaining rights for public employees, kicking off a wave of American activism last winter—garnered more than a million signatures, twice the amount needed.

Activists from **Occupy Charleston** glitter-bombed former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, citing his frothy mix of bigotry and homophobia.

WALL STREET & FINANCE & BANKS

Occupy San Francisco staged a flash mob at Wells Fargo where demonstrators reworked Lady Gaga's song "Telephone" to suit their message: "Stop calling/stop callin'/can't afford to pay anyone/I got my head and my heart in the class war."

Occupy UC Davis permanently closed a campus branch of U.S. Bank after a student-led two-month blockade.

The City of Berkeley, California, pulled \$300 million out of Wells Fargo, while at least 25 churches nationwide have withdrawn at least \$30 million from big banks. Kansas City, Missouri, passed a resolution ordering the city manager to only do business with banks that don't engage in predatory lending. In Massachusetts, the city of Brockton moved its money out of Bank of America and JPMorgan Chase after they refused to negotiate loan modifications for local homeowners facing foreclosure.

An Occupy-inspired credit union in San Francisco, **The People's Reserve Credit Union**, has been established.

DIRECT ACTION

After an occupation in February at the historic Republic Windows & Doors—now Serious Energy—plant in Chicago, tenacious workers won an agreement that will save their jobs for at least three months: "We got more than we expected. Now we have 90 days to work and try to get someone else to buy the company, with the possibility of the workers running it under our own banner." This is the same plant that union members occupied for a week in December 2008 after the previous owners and their financial backers, Bank of America, announced without warning that the factory was closing.

Atlanta Jobs with Justice, Communications Workers of America Local 3204 and **Occupy Atlanta** together prevented over 255 layoffs at AT&T, closing a 42-day-long tent occupation. A group of retirees who occupied the site of their former West Virginia workplace for 75 days under the **Occupy Century Aluminum** banner won reinstatement of their healthcare benefits.

Occupy Tucson occupied the transportation head-

MILLION HOODIE MARCH @ UNION SQUARE

Thousands gathered to protest racial profiling and the murder of Trayvon Martin. The demonstration, called by Occupy the Hood, encouraged the participants to don hoodies, the same clothing Martin wore when he was killed in Sanford, FL. The case has sparked a national debate on race, gun laws and violence. Martin's parents flew from Florida to speak at occupied Union Square, his mother saying: "This is not a black and white thing. This is a right and wrong thing." A small group headed south to Liberty Square, where they briefly took over the Wall Street bull. Similar to the Tray Davis marches that joined in at the beginning of the occupation, the Million Hoodie March sought to identify the connection between the economic violence faced by millions of Americans with the racial violence faced by communities of color by police, immigration patrols and the world's largest prison system.—Kazembe Balagun

quarters of G4S, a massive company that operates buses used to transport those being deported or moved between immigration detention facilities. "We're trying to create a day without deportations," one of the occupiers said.

Occupy NOLA—joined by **Occupy Fairhope, Alabama**—marched against oil giant BP, the company responsible for the Deepwater Horizon disaster. They held a mock funeral memorializing the health of the Gulf of Mexico, which is still polluted.

In Riverside, California, a few dozen activists from **Occupy LA** shut down three Wal-Mart distribution

centers. **Occupy Vacant Lots** has reclaimed acres of abandoned land in Philadelphia for gardening and growing food.

Occupy San Francisco took over an empty building owned by the Catholic Archdiocese and established a civic center, food bank and shelter. Barricades erected by the occupiers, large turnouts, widespread political support, and the absence of an eviction request from the church kept the police at bay for more than 24 hours. In NYC, 5,000 demonstrators formed a three-mile "unemployment line" stretching from lower Manhattan to Union Square.

By MICHAEL LEVITIN



Marine Vet Finds War at Home

There is the military kind of war and then there is the kind of war that happens in the streets. The first produces veterans. The second, gangsters. Marine Sergeant Shamar Thomas is that rare individual who has experienced life on both fronts. What makes him even more rare is the mission he has been on since September to rechannel the anger and frustration of men from "warrior communities" toward the real enemy he says they should be fighting: the 1%.

"We're all warriors but we're warriors for the wrong cause right now," said the six-foot-four, 300-pound former defensive tackle. Shamar, 26, now knows it's words

and ideas—not guns—that have the most explosive potential.

The decorated war veteran gained a worldwide following after a tirade he unleashed at NYPD officers—who were threatening protesters with violence in Times Square during the October 15 global day of action—went viral on YouTube. The image of Thomas, dressed in military fatigues and waving his arms, admonishing the mostly white cops that their acts of repression had "no honor," has been viewed more than four million times.

Thomas has helped launch two groups, Occupy Gangbangers and Global Veterans of the 99%. His

goal: to engage gangsters and veterans, transforming the destructive violence into a positive, unified power that challenges the corporate state actors who have victimized those communities.

"This is a chance to voice our issues—police brutality, economic injustice, foreclosed homes," he said. "How do I sit on a couch and watch people fight for our freedom and not do anything about it? That's cowardice. This is about my freedom and the freedom of my people."



"CHASE 5" WINS IN SEATTLE

After chaining themselves together in an occupation of a Chase bank branch in downtown Seattle, five people faced up to six months in prison for criminal trespass. In the courtroom, the "Chase Five" took a stand: they called for a jury trial, did not dispute any of the facts of the case, and instead argued that their occupation was righteous and justified. Witnesses were called on their behalf to discuss the criminal nature of the banks themselves.

In a clear act of jury nullification, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty. "The jury decided that our actions were justified, and whether this is because they thought it was somehow lawful or just the right thing to do, something is changing, and I think it's beautiful," Danielle Simmons, one of the defendants, said after the verdict was returned.

When you fall in love

it's all about what you have in common

Let's talk about Occupy Oakland. A camp was built at Oscar Grant/Frank Ogawa Plaza, and thousands received much-needed meals and healthcare for free from well-organized volunteers. A compelling and generous-spirited General Assembly took place nightly and then biweekly in which the most important things on Earth were discussed by wildly different participants. This country is segregated in so many terrible ways—and then it wasn't, for those glorious weeks when civil society awoke and fell in love with itself. Everyone showed up; everyone talked to everyone else; and in little tastes, in fleeting moments, the old divides no longer divided us. Honey never tasted sweeter, and power never felt better.

Now here's something astonishing. While the camp was in existence, crime went down 19% in Oakland, a statistic the city was careful to conceal. "It may be counter to our statement that the Occupy movement is negatively impacting crime in Oakland," the police chief wrote to the mayor in an email that local news station KTVU obtained and released to little fanfare.

Pay attention: Occupy was so powerful a force that it was directly solving Oakland's chronic crime and violence problems just by giving people hope and meals and solidarity and conversation.

Revolutions are always like this. At first all men are brothers and anything is possible, and then, if you're lucky, the romance of that heady moment ripens into a relationship. Occupy had its golden age, when those who never before imagined living side-by-side found themselves in adjoining tents in public squares; when old and young, liberal and radical, comfortable and desperate, homeless and tenured all

found that what they had in common was so compelling the differences hardly seemed to matter.

Part of what we had in common was what we were against: the current economy and the principle of insatiable greed that makes it run. This is a system that damages people, and its devastation was on display as never before in the early months of Occupy. When it was people facing foreclosure or joblessness, or thrashing around under avalanches of college or medical debt, they weren't hard to accept as us — and not them. And then came the people who'd been damaged far more—some of them endlessly needy and with a huge capacity for disruption. People who had come to fight the power found themselves staying on to figure out available mental-health resources, while others who had wanted to experience a democratic society on a grand scale found themselves trying to solve sanitation problems.

And then there was the "violence."

The most important direct violence Occupy faced was, of course, from the state, in the form of the police using maximum "sub-lethal" force on sleepers in tents, mothers with children, unarmed pedestrians, young women already penned up, unresisting seated students, poets, professors, pregnant women, wheelchair-bound occupiers and octogenarians.

On the part of activists, there were also a few notable incidents of violence in the hundreds of camps, most notably violence against women. The mainstream media seemed to think this damned the Occupy movement, though it made the camps, at worst, a whole lot like the rest of the planet, which, in case you haven't noticed, seethes with violence

against women. But these were isolated incidents.

That old line of Woody Guthrie's is always handy in situations like this: "Some will rob you with a six-gun, some with a fountain pen." The police have been going after occupiers, sending some of them to the hospital and leaving more than a few others traumatized and fearful. That's the six-gun here.

But it all began with the fountain pens, slashing through people's lives, through national and international economies, through the global markets. These were wielded by the bankers, the "vampire squid," the deregulators in D.C., the men—and with the rarest of exceptions they were men—who stole the world.

That's what Occupy came together to oppose, the grandest violence by scale, the least obvious by impact. No one on Wall Street ever had to get his suit dirty by carrying out a foreclosure eviction himself. This is the terrible violence that Occupy formed to oppose. Don't ever lose sight of that.

The honeymoon is, of course, the period when you're so in love you don't notice differences that will eventually have to be worked out. What happens now depends on vigorous participation, including yours, in thinking aloud together about who we are, what we want and how we get there, and then acting upon it. Go occupy the possibilities. And remember, it started with mad, passionate love.

BY REBECCA SOLNIT



On March 26, students walked out of Mount Zion High School in Jonesboro, Georgia, to protest the racial profiling and murder of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. Facing a suspension — which was later rescinded and replaced with an essay assignment on civil rights unrest — Aspen Evans penned the following letter to the administration:

My name is Aspen Evans.

I am a senior class secretary, Elite Scholars Program secretary and honor graduate for the class of 2012. I am writing this letter to signify that I take full responsibility for my actions pertaining to walking out of class yesterday.

My participation in today's march for Trayvon Martin was due to my need to participate in a cause that directly affects students in my age group at this school. What if that was one of Mt. Zion's own students? Would you feel differently?

We learn about those who fought for justice during the Civil Rights Movement and we publicly glorify them every February and MLK Day. Why is what we did any different?

What you witnessed yesterday was a student-led movement that surpassed my expectations in effectiveness.

We assembled as a student body for a cause without any confrontations. You cannot say that about most of the pep rallies and assemblies that we have had.

I do agree that a little more planning should have been in order, but when is the time ever right to show our distaste for injustice?

I would like it to be known that just because we are minors does not mean we are exempt from the First Amendment free speech right to "peaceably assemble" — which is exactly what we did.

As you deliberate on the actions you will take to handle this widespread "insubordination," I ask you to keep this in mind for myself as well as others that participated:

We were just fighting for what was right.

We may not have done it on proper terms, but our mission was accomplished and I am proud of Mt. Zion High School for yesterday's feat.

Sincerely,
Aspen Cierra Evans

BY YOTAM MAROM

Cartoon from *The Beginning of the American Fall* by Stephanie McMillan

Making resistance count

In September, the NYPD dragged us kicking and screaming, in handcuffs, into the headlines. Their actions won sympathy and solidarity from a lot of people who were, until then, watching from the sidelines, trying to decide if the movement was worth supporting, identifying with and joining. Arrests on the Brooklyn Bridge in early October did even more of that, catapulting the movement into the national and international arenas. The events dramatically inflated our numbers, deepened resolve and won tremendous popular support. We were unstoppable. The whole world was watching. We were winning.

Many of us in the movement have gotten used to thinking that it's always a good thing to appear in the paper getting arrested in large numbers, as long as we can practice nonviolence and come out of it looking innocent. But there's another side to it.

What if the politicians and bankers don't actually care if we are in the news? What if the NYPD doesn't care if the violence looks like it's their fault or ours? Maybe to them it doesn't matter whose fault it is, as long as what is being communicated is that anyone who sets foot in the streets with the Occupy movement has a good shot at ending up in the Tombs, New York's central booking jail. In fact, they might be



thinking that the more people who see those gruesome images on the cover of the *Daily News*, the better.

Make no mistake about it: The people most affected by the injustices we fight have always been the backbone of any mass movement for social change. But the consequences aren't the same for everyone, and people are most inclined to lay it on the line when the things at stake are real, critical and pressing. So while the images of activists being beaten and arrested might win sympathy, even solidarity, they might just as well prevent many people from participating. We don't always choose when we are arrested, and we don't

always have control over how it is depicted in the press, but we do have some power over what

kinds of battles we choose to wage and how we choose to wage them. While the image of the police arresting protesters reveals some truths, it can obscure others. Sometimes we contribute to this problem ourselves, for instance when we narrow our focus to fights over public space or the right to protest in and of itself.

Civil disobedience is a tool, one we employ to win real things and push the struggle forward, as part of a broader strategy to transform society. It should be thought-out and well-timed, carefully employed on a worthy target and led by those most affected.

BY YOTAM MAROM

Cartoon from *The Beginning of the American Fall* by Stephanie McMillan



May 1st and the 'Troublesome Element'

A flyer passed hand-to-hand, calling for militant action for an eight-hour working day in the U.S. on May 1, 1886:

"One day of revolt — not rest! A day not ordained by the bragging spokesmen of institutions holding the world of labor in bondage. A day on which labor makes its own laws and has the power to execute them!"

The workers who struck on May 1 faced police bullets. Their leaders were hanged. Outraged, an international gathering of revolutionary workers declared that May First would become a worldwide day of resistance and revolution.

May First is our day and this is its story: In 1886, American capitalism felt triumphant. Its armies had carved up Mexico and defeated the Southern slave-

owners. Its government had betrayed the African American people and created Jim Crow. Its armies were hunting down Native peoples on the plains.

But meanwhile, in the slums of Chicago, dreams of working men and women found expression — in radical politics.

Chicago was alive with revolutionary newspapers, underground union networks and armed militias of workers. Some were veterans of class war in Europe. Albert Parsons participated in struggles of freed slaves in Texas. Their movement embraced the "Chicago Idea" — a militant form of syndicalist anarchism.

The *Arbeiter Zeitung* wrote: "If we do not soon bestir ourselves for a bloody revolution, we can not leave anything to our children but poverty and slavery."

The rightwing press called radical immigrants "the troublesome element." The Philadelphia Tribune reported: "'The labor element' has been bitten by a kind of universal tarantula — it has gone 'dancing mad.'"

Chicago authorities feared they might lose control of the city. When 30,000 struck on May 1, police attacked. After two workers were shot, a leaflet proclaimed, "WORKING MEN, TO ARMS!!!"

Thousands gathered at Haymarket Square on May 4. Armed police demanded that workers disperse. Suddenly a bomb went off among the cops. Hundreds were shot in the volleys of police bullets. Several died.

A frenzy of repression erupted. Newspaper subscription lists were used to round up thousands.

Captives were tortured. Leaders of Chicago's movement were put on trial for murder. A hysterical press demanded their execution.

The defendant Louis Lingg died violently in his cell. Then Nov. 11, 1886, four heroic men — August Spies, George Engel, Albert Parsons and Adolf Fisher — were hanged. Workers around the world mourned.

Ever since, May 1 is the day we rise, we dream, we fight, in every country of the world. May Day is when the working class speaks in its own name.

BY MIKE ELY

Revolution is about real people in everyday life

I've been involved in a lot of anti-police brutality campaigns, a lot of them. What I've realized is that the community, except for a few cases — and even then for a short time — doesn't respond to those campaigns. It doesn't galvanize them. Why? Because even in the ones that are successful, very little happens. Someone gets transferred, things like that. People might support you and agree with you, but people have always been supporting and agreeing with movements and that's not what we want. What we want is participation.

We've been focusing too much on things that don't get to the heart of the matter. So many times throughout the years I'm trying to get people to get involved and they think that it's all too abstract. It doesn't speak to what they were dealing with: paying the bills. It's time for revolutionaries to be addressing some of these concerns. What people get excited about is what they see as possible leverage and power.

We've been doing a lot of foreclosure defense work in ways that cut through all the questions of tactics and go straight to strategies. Occupy Oakland has had more black folks from the hood, who aren't students, than any movement I've been a part of over the last 20 years. What that participation has to do with is the line that many folks in the movement have been taking up.

In Oakland, there is a general assembly but that's not where a lot of the decision making actually happens. People are creating committees and campaigns, and then maybe bringing it to the GA after it's already somewhat developed. The extent of the support depends on the campaign. Occupy Oakland Foreclosure wasn't some official group when it started, but it had already been doing work and had some success in a couple of cases.

For example: Gayla Newsome was kicked out of her home. She'd been out of her house for at least eight months but the house was empty. We gathered a bunch of people and went over to her house and put her in there. We announced that we were going to protect it. There were a few neighbors who didn't get along with Gayla. They called the police and said, "Occupy Oakland is moving somebody into a foreclosed home and we need you guys to get down here right now." And the police were like, "Is [Occupy Oakland] moving into the house, or are they moving a family into the house?" They went through this whole gamut of questions, put the woman on hold and came back to say, "That's too political a situation for us."

Ms. Newsome is still in her house; she's getting a loan modification. It's much different when you have an action and people can see for themselves that this movement they've been told is an evil thing is defending a family and moving them into a house while the police are trying to move them out.

Where it stands is, the Oakland Police didn't want to be seen in such a clear way as being on the side of the banks while Occupy is on the side of a family. People know that this system is about money. It's more than that. Direct action is capturing folks' imagination. The reason they've had to demonize what we're doing is because they know people are likely to support it.

ADAPTED FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH BOOTS RILEY

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