

## NYC — Occupy Together

**I**n just over ten days, over 40 cities have emerged to join the Occupy Wall Street effort. Erupting in an astonishing way, this movement is bringing together diverse backgrounds and skills to work together to address excessive corporate influence in government. Browsing through Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, the depth of participation and excitement is right there. Contrasted to the excruciating politicking of Congress, in which solutions, if they are decided upon, do not go into affect for a year or two, many are feeling the hope that real change can emerge from this leaderless movement in which people are leaving their homes to occupy thier communities.

In New York, we have been witness to the generosity of many anonymous people dropping by Liberty Square with donations of food, medical supplies, tents, tarps and sleeping bags. Helping the campers is not unique to NYC. In Chicago, protesters reported the same solidarity in the occupation developing outside the Chicago Federal Reserve.

Meetings are being held almost daily to start a nationwide Occupy effort in October; already the list of cities that have signed on is jaw-dropping, and surprising, Birmingham. San Diego. Las Vegas. Omaha. Boston. Lexington. San Francisco. Philadelphia. Kansas City. Washington. Tampa. Denver. Pittsburgh. Buffalo. Charlotte. Richmond. Austin. Salt Lake City. Asheville. Miami. With new occupations popping up every day.

If occupiers cannot get answers and solutions from government through the ballot, they will do it through the power of their presence in an "inconvenient space."

We are at the beginning of a monumental change in this country, and the world. The system won't change itself. It's up to us: our bodies in the street, our talents put to work, our passion given life. Systemic change requires more than "protesters" and "activists." You. Your family. Your friends. Your neighbors. All of us. Now.

BY MICHAEL LEVITIN, GRIM & JED BRANDT



**WE'RE ALL IN THIS:** The occupation has spread beyond its first days to include an increasing number of families, local union workers, teachers and students from across the five boroughs.

## PUSHED OUT OF OUR HOMES AND INTO THE STREET

**I** am a 27-year-old journalist living in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. Journalists, as a rule, do not readily identify themselves with organizations or movements. We're supposed to strive for objectivity. Get the whole story. Look at things from all sides. We don't want to have our work undermined by any affiliations. We don't want to advocate. That's a job for PR reps. Advocacy, to us, is the Dark Side.

But I am announcing my solidarity with the Occupy Wall Street movement.

On the morning of Wednesday, Sept. 28, I left for Brussels, Wisconsin. It's your average Midwestern small town: population of a few hundred, one gas station, a couple of churches and a few too many bars. That's where my mom and stepdad live. I flew out there to help them move out of their home.

Well, technically, it is no longer their home. The new owner is Freddie Mac, which along with Bank of America is kicking my mom and stepdad out of their home.

That house has been in my stepdad's family for over 100 years. He and my mom remodeled the place about 10 years back. My mom had made sure there were enough bedrooms for when my sisters and I came back home with grandchildren for her to spoil. That's not going to happen there, now.

It is difficult for me to grasp this. I don't think I fully will until I am finished clearing rooms and lug-ging boxes.

It's hard, and it doesn't feel right. Didn't Bank of America get more than \$100 billion in bailouts? Didn't they receive a tax refund of \$1.9 billion from the IRS, alongside the \$4.4 billion in 2010 profits? Why do they get saved by the government after handing out countless high-risk loans, and then again get a safety net from government-sponsored enterprises like Freddie Mac when recipients of those loans have to default? How is this okay?

I moved to New York in January of 2010 and landed an internship at Thomson Reuters in spite of the festering financial crisis. It was originally supposed to be an unpaid internship, but I convinced them to change it to an hourly wage. It was also supposed to be 20 hours a week, but over time I pushed them to make it full-time. By the summer they decided to turn my position into a salaried gig. I was ecstatic.

But I wasn't happy with the work. First of all, it wasn't journalism. I wrote an internal newsletter. If you were not a Thomson Reuters employee or a programming guy at a bank I can guarantee that you never read my newsletter. Second, it didn't feel like I was doing good work. I wrote a monthly newsletter for the company's global stock network — a complex system that shoots trade information from stock markets all over the world to banks and brokers and billionaires.

Our clients were among the most powerful people in the world.

Comfort the afflicted. Afflict the comfortable. That's what a journalist strives to do. Me? I was comforting the comfortable.

Economist Edward Wolff's work has shown that, as late as 2007, the top 1% of American households held 34.6% of all privately held wealth in the United States. Within this affluent contingent, Wolff notes, the wealth distribution is again hyper-concentrated to the top .1%. The vast majority of the households in this bracket include players in the finance and banking industries.

This bothered me. A lot. My work went against a lot of my principles, and this affected my well-being. I grew depressed. I started eating less. My sleep cycle started going haywire. I doubled down on my drinking habits.

Finally, last August, I quit. Since then, I've been freelancing. It's been great. I'm broke, yeah. But it's been great.

I used to cover border issues in Arizona, and I did some immigration work in southern Mexico. Here in New York, I've been gravitating towards the police beat. Never did I think about covering finance or national politics. Never did I want to write about our nation's financial crisis.

But then Freddie Mac and Bank of America pushed my mom out of her home.

So here I am. Committed. To the dialogue. To the movement. To what some of my fellow young men and women camped out in Liberty Plaza are calling The Revolution.

My friends have already told me that I'm crazy. That Occupy Wall Street is nothing more than a bunch of dirty, jobless kids who have no idea what they're fighting, who are merely beating drums and barking at cops. But that's not what I've seen.

The movement knows precisely what it is fighting. It is fighting the astoundingly unfair distribution of wealth in our country while 46 million Americans live in poverty — and that is by federal guidelines that says a mom and two kids are no longer poor if they make \$19,000 a year. It is fighting the reality that Wall Street and Capitol Hill are one in the same. It is fighting, tooth and nail, the disintegration of the American middle class. Simply put, it is fighting greed.

I can also tell you that it's new. That structure isn't yet in place the way some might want it to be. That demands have not yet been fully sculpted and articulated.

But the Occupation is only in its second week, and it is gaining more momentum than anyone had dreamed. Numbers continue to grow in that small square. Makeshift beds pepper the western end. Protest signs line the north. Someone has set up a library to the east.

Beyond that, the rest of the world has begun to pay attention. Food, supplies and donations are streaming



BY DAVID KEMPA

in from well-wishers who cannot occupy the square themselves. Doctors are manning the medical station. Lawyers are consulting the recently arrested. Elected officials, musicians and other public figures have come by to count themselves among the Occupation's ranks. Things are moving.

If you are a New Yorker, and you haven't yet stopped by Liberty Plaza — do it. It's astounding. The excitement. The empathy. The absolute fortitude of these folks. It almost moves me to tears to stand among them. They are there because so many among us continue to struggle. They are there because bad things are happening to good people. They are there for my mother.

And when I return to New York this week, I will be there too.

## WE OCCUPY BECAUSE

“corporate tax dodgers bankrupting our economy”

“my daughter deserves

the world is on the c change and I plan to scales in favor of all t

I trust people who sleep c trust bankers, traders, or j

when I hear “Grandma, w the American Rising?” I c stood and said ENOUGH!

the \$1 in my pocket i ExxonMobil paid in t

the “American Dream’ make people work the

I can't find a good job eve work hard. @madmike711

democracy is built, n

I'm sick of my faith bein oppression, injustice, g

it's time they feel how buy your facade of a d

NYC schoolchildren des hedge-fund sponsored l good school. @ourschoolsnyc

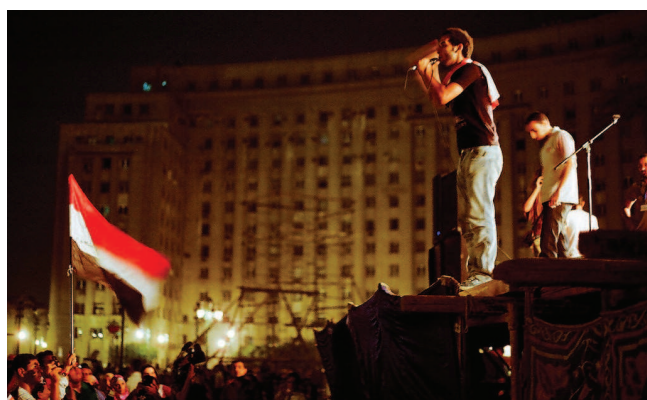
“Every generation nee (Thomas Jefferson). @a

### TUNISIA

Twenty-six-year old produce vendor Mohammed Bouazizi sets himself on fire in response to years of petty police harassment in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia. His self-immolation sparks a wave of protests against the decades-long autocratic rule of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. After four weeks, Ben Ali is forced to dissolve parliament and flees to Saudi Arabia.

### EGYPT

Using canvassing, social networking and citizen-made media, organizers launch an 18-day protest in Cairo's Tahrir Square. Violence by the regime's thugs and the blocking of internet traffic inspire hundreds of thousands of Egyptians to join, swinging world opinion against President Hosni Mubarak's dictatorial government which falls on Feb. 11. The dual success inspires an Arab Spring of pro-democracy activism from Yemen to Bahrain to Syria.



### WISCONSIN

More than 20,000 Wisconsinites protest Gov. Scott Walker's (R) austerity budget and his attack on collective bargaining. Hundreds of students are arrested. A protest in Columbus, Ohio against similar attacks on the public sector draws nearly 4,000 protesters. Demonstrators at both rallies carry Egyptian flags and signs drawing a parallel between their struggles.

### LONDON

500,000 protestors take to London's streets in the March for the Alternative, a movement coordinated by the Trades Union Congress. Teachers and public sector workers hold massive strikes in support of the movement.

### GREECE & SPAIN

Tens of thousands of protestors gather in Athens after plans were announced to cut public spending and raise taxes in exchange for a 110 billion euro bailout. Three weeks later, more than 1,000 *indignados* camp in Puerta del Sol, Madrid's central square. 30,000 supporters gather for a series of mass assemblies that put forward popular demands, including a greater say in the political process and an end to austerity measures enacted by the Spanish government.



17 DEC

25 JAN

17 FEB

26 MAR

5 MAY



...s who we bailed out are  
...nomy again. @usuncut

...s a better future. @jstlilone

...asp of great  
...help tip the  
...hat is good.

...on the street more than I  
...politicians. @critmasspanic

...here were you during  
...an say "On the first day I  
..." @Timcast

...s more than GE, BP and  
...axes last year. @usuncut

... 'is a slogan created to  
...mselves to death. @yarazza

...n though I am willing to

...ot granted. @reverendmanny

...ng used to justify  
...reed, and war. @protestchaplain

...fed up we are. We don't  
...emocracy. @sir\_younis

...serve better then  
...lotteries to get into a  
...

...eds a new Revolution"  
...sh\_anderson



**WALL STREET: DAY 1**  
2,000 people rally in response to a call to occupy Wall Street and march to protest corporate influence in the political process. They set up camp in Zuccotti Park, just north of the New York Stock Exchange, renaming it Liberty Plaza. Lupe Fiasco donates 50 tents in support of the occupation.

**DAY 7**  
Protestors march to Union Square, where police arrest 87 people for demonstrating in the streets, many of whom express anger over what they perceive as the unjust execution of Troy Davis three days prior.

**DAY 9**  
Occupiers form working groups to discuss organizing tactics on a national level and to begin preparing direct action plans through social networking and community outreach. They initiate liasons with teachers, union workers and other activists to build towards Saturday's march.

**DAY 10**  
Protestors continue daily marches on Wall Street and join with United Postal Service workers at a rally to help protect federal jobs. On the same day, over 700 Continental and United pilots demonstrate in front of Wall Street. Over the next two days, the General Assembly of New York City approves a Declaration of the Occupation, see above.



**DAY 13**  
Members of Occupy Wall Street stage citywide marches, perform guerilla theater and rally the 99% to take back the streets – and their future!



# Declaration of the Occupation

APPROVED BY CONSENSUS ON SEPT. 29, 2011  
AT THE NEW YORK CITY GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
IN OCCUPIED LIBERTY SQUARE.

As we gather together in solidarity to express a feeling of mass injustice, we must not lose sight of what brought us together. We write so that all people who feel wronged by the corporate forces of the world can know that we are your allies.

As one people, united, we acknowledge the reality: that the future of the human race requires the cooperation of its members; that our system must protect our rights, and upon corruption of that system, it is up to the individuals to protect their own rights, and those of their neighbors; that a democratic government derives its just power from the people, but corporations do not seek consent to extract wealth from the people and the Earth; and that no true democracy is attainable when the process is determined by economic power. We come to you at a time when corporations, which place profit over people, self-interest over justice, and oppression over equality, run our governments. We have peaceably assembled here, as is our right, to let these facts be known.

They have taken our houses through an illegal foreclosure process, despite not having the original mortgage.

They have taken bailouts from taxpayers with impunity, and continue to give Executives exorbitant bonuses.

They have perpetuated inequality and discrimination in the workplace based on age, the color of one's skin, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation.

They have poisoned the food supply through negligence, and undermined the farming system through monopolization.

They have profited off of the torture, confinement, and cruel treatment of countless nonhuman animals, and actively hide these practices.

They have continuously sought to strip employees of the right to negotiate for better pay and safer working conditions.

They have held students hostage with tens of thousands of dollars of debt on education, which is itself a human right.

They have consistently outsourced labor and used that outsourcing as leverage to cut workers' healthcare and pay.

They have influenced the courts to achieve the same rights as people, with none of the culpability or responsibility.

They have spent millions of dollars on legal teams that look for ways to get them out of contracts in regards to health insurance.

They have sold our privacy as a commodity.

They have used the military and police force to prevent freedom of the press.

They have deliberately declined to recall faulty products endangering lives in pursuit of profit.

They determine economic policy, despite the catastrophic failures their policies have produced and continue to produce.

They have donated large sums of money to politicians supposed to be regulating them. They continue to block alternate forms of energy to keep us dependent on oil.

They continue to block generic forms of medicine that could save people's lives in order to protect investments that have already turned a substantive profit.

They have purposely covered up oil spills, accidents, faulty bookkeeping, and inactive ingredients in pursuit of profit.

They purposefully keep people misinformed and fearful through their control of the media.

They have accepted private contracts to murder prisoners even when presented

with serious doubts about their guilt.

They have perpetuated colonialism at home and abroad. They have participated in the torture and murder of innocent civilians overseas.

They continue to create weapons of mass destruction in order to receive government contracts. \*

To the people of the world, We, the New York City General Assembly occupying Wall Street in Liberty Square, urge you to assert your power.

Exercise your right to peaceably assemble; occupy public space; create a process to address the problems we face, and generate solutions accessible to everyone.

To all communities that take action and form groups in the spirit of direct democracy; we offer support, documentation, and all of the resources at our disposal.

Join us and make your voices heard!

*\*These grievances are not all-inclusive.*

## No excuses left. IT'S NOW OR NEVER

Either you join the revolt taking place on Wall Street and in the financial districts of other cities across the country or you stand on the wrong side of history.

Either you obstruct, in the only form left to us, which is civil disobedience, the plundering by the criminal class on Wall Street and accelerated destruction of the ecosystem that sustains the human species, or become the passive enabler of a monstrous evil. Either you taste, feel and smell the intoxication of freedom and revolt or sink into the miasma of despair and apathy. Either you are a rebel or a slave.

Choose. But choose fast. The state and corporate forces are determined to crush this. They are not going to wait for you. They are terrified this will spread.

They have their long phalanxes of police on motorcycles, their rows of white paddy wagons and their metal barricades set up on every single street leading into the New York financial district where the suits use your money, money they stole from you, to

gamble and speculate and gorge themselves while one in four children outside those barricades depend on food stamps to eat.

Speculation in the 17th century was a crime. Speculators were hanged. Today they run the state and the financial markets. They disseminate the lies that pollute our airwaves. They know, even better than you, how pervasive the corruption and theft have become, how gamed the system is against you, how corporations have cemented into place a thin oligarchic class and an obsequious cadre of politicians, judges and journalists who live in their little gated Versailles while 6 million Americans are thrown out of their homes, a million people a year go bankrupt because they cannot pay their medical bills and 45,000 die from lack of proper care; where real joblessness is spiraling to over 20 percent, where the citizens, including students, spend lives toiling in debt working dead-end jobs, when they have jobs, in a world devoid of hope, a world of masters and serfs.

The only word these corporations know

is more. They are disemboweling every last social service program funded by the taxpayers, from education to Social Security, because they want that money themselves. Let the sick die. Let the poor go hungry. Let families be tossed in the street. Let the unemployed rot. Let children in the inner city or rural wastelands learn nothing and live in misery and fear. Let the students finish school with no jobs and no prospects of jobs. Let the prison system, the largest in the industrial world, expand to swallow up all potential dissenters. Let torture continue. Let teachers, police, firefighters, postal employees and social workers join the ranks of the unemployed. Let the roads, bridges, dams, levees, power grids, rail lines, subways, bus services, schools and libraries crumble or close. Let the rising temperatures of the planet, the freak weather patterns, the hurricanes, the droughts, the flooding, the tornadoes, the melting polar ice caps, the poisoned water systems, the polluted air increase until the species dies.

If you do not shake off the 1% very, very soon they will kill you. And they will kill



**CHOOSE. BUT CHOOSE FAST. THE STATE AND CORPORATE FORCES ARE DETERMINED TO CRUSH THIS.**

the ecosystem, dooming your children and your children's children. So either you rise up and dismantle the corporate state for a world of sanity – where we no longer kneel before the absurd idea that the demands of financial markets should govern human behavior – or we are frog-marched toward self-annihilation.

Those on the streets around Wall Street are the physical embodiment of hope. They know that hope has a cost, that it is not easy or comfortable, that it requires self-sacrifice and discomfort and finally faith. They sleep on concrete every night. Their

clothes are soiled. They have tasted fear, been beaten, gone to jail, been blinded by pepper spray, cried, hugged each other, laughed, sung, talked too long in general assemblies, seen their chants drift upward to the office towers above them, wondered if it is worth it, if anyone cares, if they will win. But as long as they remain steadfast they point the way out of the corporate labyrinth. This is what it means to be alive. They are the best among us.

BY CHRIS HEDGES

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# Five Things You Can Do Right Now

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# MAP

