OCCUPY!

#3

AN OWS-INSPIRED GAZETTE

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THE EVICTION

Last night, in what seems to be part of a coordinated crackdown on occupations across the country, Zuccotti Park was raided. Though not all of us had subscribed to the text alert system, or who got emails or phone calls or panicked Twitter messages, went to Wall Street. But we could not get near the camp. Two blocks north of Liberty Park on Broadway, blocked by a police barricade that circled the whole area, I found myself part of a small crowd straining to see what was happening. In the distance, Zuccotti Park was like a sports field, glaring eerily, and I could make out a loudspeaker, blasting announcements and threats. Sounds of people chanting and screaming floated towards us. While we paced the street, seething and sorrowful, tents were trampled, people's possessions piled up, and occupiers arrested. Later I would come across a camper I had met earlier in the day sobbing on the sidewalk. A few blocks west, maybe thirty minutes after I arrived, the police line broke so two huge dump trucks could pass through. So that was it: we, and everything we had made and were; the wall of the park was breached. The authorities must be ashamed, because they so badly did not want anyone to see what happened last night. First they attacked the senses, flooding the park with bright light, giving us acid to our faces; later they corralled the press into pens, arrested reporters, and shut down airspace over lower Manhattan, so that no news stations would arrive before dawn. As we strained our necks over their barricades they kept telling us that there was nothing to see. But clearly there was! We knew they were lying. And when we told them they would push us back, we forced them to do just that. We were herded like sheep, and I felt like one, meekly following orders, a terrible coward. Those who resisted—those who stood their ground on a public sidewalk we all have a right to stand on—got maced in the face, right in the eyes. The authorities so badly did not want anyone to see what happened last night they were willing to temporarily blind us.

As the hours wore on, a single menacing helicopter hovered overhead, ominously tracking impromptu marches, which raced from Foley Square to Astor Place and back. At 3 AM I got separated from friends but realized I could use that helicopter as a beacon. I followed it up Centre and then crossed Houston just in time to see the cops, who had arrived in the middle of the night, tramp over the tents and yank out the wires. As we clambered up the hill to our barricades they kept telling us that we were nothing to see. But clearly there was! We knew they were lying. And when we told them they would push us back, we forced them to do just that. We were herded like sheep, and I felt like one, meekly following orders, a terrible coward. Those who resisted—those who stood their ground on a public sidewalk we all have a right to stand on—got maced in the face, right in the eyes. The authorities so badly did not want anyone to see what happened last night they were willing to temporarily blind us.

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

A life of qualities? Is quality, by definition immeasurable, only describable, something that can be charted by the cleanliness of a street, the absence of certain smells, certain people? Is the absence of dirt, smells, noise and people we call “wards” the mayor means “thieving”? Is there really a right not to see certain things, and can the mayor of New York City destroy individual property in its name? Alas, this property was erected on a too-fragile foundation: “The law that created Zuccotti Park required that it be open for the public to enjoy for passive recreation 24 hours a day.” “Passive recreation,” another phrase by the same up Bloomberg’s New York. This is bureau-speak to say that you can’t play a game of touch football in Zuccotti Park, but why not apply it more broadly, for instance to the making of speeches and the holding of assemblies? Is that a violation of the passivity or the recreation, or both?

Ever since the occupation began, that law has been broken. The park has been taken over by protesters, making it unavailable to anyone else. Here begins a litany of charges against the protesters, which, as they multiply, become increasingly incoherent and contradictory. This first count is purely tendentious: the park was not “unavailable to anyone else” until the police themselves erected barricades around it. Maybe it was a less nice place to be, but it was not broken. The next break than it used to be. There were funny people and they smelled funny, and they had to shout over the drum circle, but the City of New York has no problems telling people where they can and cannot walk their dogs and where they can and cannot have lunch, smoke cigarettes, make out, etc. cetera. The protesters barred no one entry to the park, a fact that the police and the media—enormousness being threatened and complaints about noise and unsanitary conditions...
near an area where a resident of a thriving neighborhood might walk.

The city did not do this. Instead, the mayor explains, in the interest of public health and safety, “The city is under a state of public health emergency, to cry fire when the danger is from cold, that’s humane and responsible governance.”

The mayor’s final justification, however, rests simply on a dictum, “make no mistake—the final decision to act was mine...” followed by another round of confusing double-speak, “I could not wait for someone in the park to get killed or to injure another first responder before acting. Others have cautioned against action because enforcing our laws might be used by some protesters as a pretext for police violence...”

The overall tone of Bloomberg’s state of the city address this year takes us back directly to the chaotic pre-Occupy Wall Street moment where像素enforcement, both sides are present, and the violence to the protesters and the thought of enforcement, both sides are present, neither unequivocally.

What emerges between the lines is the invocation of “pretexthearts” have been following the city’s campaign against the protesters from the beginning of the demonstrations. The mayor’s claims that the mayor was casting about for was precisely a pretext, and a pretext to do exactly what he did last night: raze the park in the most aggressive way possible, through maximal force projection, and under a media blackout, stacking everything on the hope that the protesters would behave peacefully, in exactly the opposite way that he would have liked to characterize them. Why was the media blacked out? Says Bloomberg, "[We had] to protect the members of the press. We have to provide protection and we have done exactly that....."
The New School in Exile, Revisited

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

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

The New School needed to improve its financial situation and its status, and it was going to do it, like any New York institution, through real estate. They were going to tear down one of the original 1930s buildings and replace it with a state-of-the-art gleaming sixteen-story tower, home to studios for designers and artists studying at the New School’s profitable design institute, Parsons, and laboratories (for whom, no one could tell you; the New School offers no courses in hard sciences), retail food vendors, apartments, and—most insulting of all, I think, to the symbols heirs, as we liked to consider ourselves, of refugees from fascism—a fitness center. At the time, this was perfectly fine, for one thing, and for another we thought the money could be better spent on fellowships for debt-saddled students (like me!). The campus was in an uproar already after the faculty senate, enraged that the university’s president, Bob Kerrey, had, after his fifth successive provost left the job, simply assumed the post himself, passed a unanimous no-confidence vote against him. Shortly after news got around about the faculty vote, an unofficial student meeting was called. There were fliers posted around campus by the Radical Student Union. About fifty of us gathered in the basement of the new graduate building on 16th Street. A piece of butcher paper was thrown up on the wall, and a list of demands was produced: we wanted Kerrey and his vice-president, Jim Murna, to resign; a new provost selected by the student body; a transparent academic budget; and, later, we added another demand that propelling us to action: that the demolishing and “capital improvement” of 65 Fifth be cancelled.

Most of the meeting’s attendees were graduate students in the Social Research division, notably more interested in radical politics than, say, students at Parsons. The meeting was led by a tall, skinny Philosophy graduate named Jacob, and a chain-smoking Politics student with deep bags under her eyes named Fatuma. Before the meeting started, Jacob passed around a pamphlet he’d written about direct action as he munched, ostentatiously, on a bagel. Another of the leaders was Tim, a gruff, pamphlet he wrote about the “Day of Action,” as if it were a premonition of future assaults. As Mayor Michael Bloomberg stood flanked by white-coated doctors at Bellevue Hospital to update the press on Officer Matthew Walsner’s hand, photos circulated of a protester with blood pouring down his face. Reporters quickly explained why the 20-year-old boy deserved a cracked head: he had thrown an AAA battery at one police officer and stolen the bat from another officer’s head. If a bloody face is what you get when you throw a battery, one shudders to imagine what will happen if the police find the elusive star-hurler.

The over-reporting of protester violence has many causes, but two have loomed large: the last several weeks: the divergent organizations of policing and protest on the one hand, and the professionalized relationship between the police and the press on the other. First, any instance of protester violence creates the illusion of an easily grasped, symmetrical conflict: person versus personone with a glass star, the other with a polymer club. There is something much more difficult to capture about a prolonged yet asymmetrical conflict—an entire police force, with military armaments and intelligence operatives, enacting a strategy of suppression over several months against a shifting, unarmed collective. While there has been some insightful coverage of the composition and tactics of the occupation (for months, all reports had to do with the shutdown of Zuccotti Park and ask around), reporting from within the corridors of One Police Plaza has been almost non-existent. The secrecy and complexity of police operations—symptoms of an increasingly militarized

JEREMY KESSLER

THIS IS WHAT NONVIOLENCE LOOKS LIKE

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

For many days prior to November 17, occupiers had met to map out the multiple stages of the action, noting the intersections where police would try to bottleneck marchers and devising routes of retreat that would allow them to re-group when faced with overwhelming police force. In order to spread out the police presence, they planned to stagger the march; sections would leave minutes apart and aim for different access points to Wall Street. With these general contours in mind, over a dozen affinity groups—self-organizing sets of volunteers—met to plan actions within the action; some would break off from the main march to proceed directly to Wall Street through a Duane Reade on Pine; others planned acts of civil disobedience at strategic locations.

The unpredictable movements and the “diversity of tactics” employed by the occupiers—from traditional civil disobedience to absurd dance routines—frequently cause police, spoiled by total complacency, to become panicked or enraged. As a result, the police did as much as the marchers to block access to Wall Street, manhandling pedestrians and “freezing” intersections in order to stanch the unpredictable flow of protest. Perhaps the chief breakdown of police control occurred around 10 AM at the intersection of Broad and Beaver, where several strands of the march met after earlier sit-ins on Pine Street. Unprepared for this secondary flow, the police initially allowed marchers to take to the street, dancing and singing. Then some creative editors transformed a metal barricade into a plow, using it to sweep up or knock down protesters.

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

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RACHEL SIGNER

Occupy on Campus

The New School in Exile, Revisited

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

I’m not sure at what point we came up with the name “New School in Exile,” but it stuck. It was, of course, a reference to the proud history of the institution, its birth as a place of exile. And not only that. When I’d told my parents that I was planning to go do a master’s at The New School, I learned that my grandfather had been expelled from City College in the nineteen-thirties for protests against Fascism in Europe, then gone on to become a journalist for The Daily Worker; my grandmother, who knew Italian and Spanish, had been a union organizer. In Sectors of Marx, which I read in my second year of graduate school (by which point I was about $30,000 in the hole), Derrida talks about the ghostly nature of politics, how it moves in cycles. That night, as hundreds of New School, CUNY, and NYU students gathered outside the building, on Fifth Avenue, sending us tweets and text messages of solidarity, and as we huddled inside, writing our list of demands, I felt my grandparents’ ghosts inside me, in that building, likely the very same one where they had read philosophy and sociology and tried to channel those ideas into creating a better world.

That night we put up our new “New School in Exile” banners, and a blog was created in that name by a politics student named Scott. Scott, it must be said, was a Leninist, which pissed everybody off and made us worried, because he was our media guy. But for the moment, things were great.

Keith Gessen
“N17”

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

And most of the people making their way to work that day, whose progress we slowed a little bit—these were not the masters of the universe. If you have to show up at 8 am at the NYSE and spend the day yelling orders at a broker, chances are you’re not the guy who breaks national currencies and shorts entire economic sectors. After we were arrested and taken to the Tombs, we got periodic updates, over the phone, about what had happened outside. One of the drug dealers we were in with called his girlfriend, who works for the MTA—we occupied the subway, he said. People cheered. And one of the protesters called a friend: The opening bell of the stock exchange was fifteen minutes late! We cheered some more and high-fived.

It turned out not to be true. The stock exchange opened on time, and shares of companies were exchanged, short positions taken, options called—and good for them. But you have to start somewhere. Some of what Wall Street does is valuable and important; some of it, as in most industries, is neutral and irrelevant and just wheel-spinning; and a certain portion of what it does should be illegal. Everyone on Wall Street knows this. I think what we were saying is that we now know it too.
mobilized and were ready, were near the school even, waiting, to join us. They wanted to come in that night. We discussed it; I remember not liking the idea, but I can’t remember why. Eventually we voted it down. It didn’t matter. At around 1 a.m. on the second night of the occupation, about one hundred and fifty people, with Mohawks and patched-together cargo pants and Doc Martens, came pouring into the building. Graeber had found a side entrance unguarded by the security guards. As the students ran in, the guards attempted to stop them, throwing them up against the wall or grabbing at their limbs, but the anarchists pushed through and nearly every single one of them made it into the cafeteria, where we were cheering. We hadn’t liked the idea, but now, we felt, we were stronger. There were over two hundred of us. The negotiations were continuing with the administration. We felt that it was possible we would succeed.

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

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

Karen Smith
THE LEGAL ISSUES OF ZUCOTTI PARK

In the early morning hours of November 15, 2011, the New York City Police Department, under the direction of New York City’s mayor, Michael Bloomberg, carried out a stealth attack to evict the occupants at Zuccotti Park. Soon afterward, lawyers on both sides fashioned arguments as to whether the eviction of the occupiers—and the banning of tents, sleeping bags, or any other items which would make it possible for the occupiers to remain through a cold winter—violated their First Amendment rights. By 6:30 a.m., the lawyers representing OWS were able to obtain a temporary restraining order (TRO), issued by Justice Lucy Billings, that prohibited the City from barring the protestors from the park and permitted them to reenter with their tents and sleeping bags. The Order would remain in effect until 11:30 a.m. at which time a hearing would determine if the TRO should be continued. The case was then reassigned, allegedly, to the next judge on “the wheel,” a practice followed by the Courts when a TRO is obtained after-hours.

At approximately 12:00 p.m., Justice Stallman heard oral arguments from lawyers representing both sides. Later that afternoon, Justice Stallman issued a decision permitting the protestors to continue their protest in the park, but denied them the right to bring their tents and sleeping bags with them or to remain overnight. Justice Stallman held that the First Amendment does not include the right to have the accouterments (sleeping bags and tents) which enable people to exercise their first amendment rights. It appears that he may now even be prepared to hold that the First Amendment does not apply to Zuccotti Park as it is not a “public” park.

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

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

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

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

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

The City has to argue that its actions followed its general police power to protect the public as there is no other legal basis for the City’s actions. If an owner wishes to evict someone from their property, they have to bring a proceeding or action (if it is a squatter (a legal, not moral term), as in this case, the owner has to bring in an “ejectment action” in State Supreme Court (as there is no landlord-tenant relationship). If there were a landlord tenant relationship, the landlord would have to commence a proceeding in Housing Court.) Even if Brookfield had commenced the appropriate action, the NYPD probably could not evict. It would be the City Marshall who would have to commence a proceeding (in Housing Court). Even if Brookfield had commenced the appropriate action, the NYPD probably could not evict. It would be the City Marshall who would have to commence a proceeding (in Housing Court). Even if Brookfield had commenced the appropriate action, the NYPD probably could not evict. It would be the City Marshall who would have to commence a proceeding (in Housing Court). Even if Brookfield had commenced the appropriate action, the NYPD probably could not evict. It would be the City Marshall who would have to commence a proceeding (in Housing Court). Even if Brookfield had commenced the appropriate action, the NYPD probably could not evict. It would be the City Marshall who would have to commence a proceeding (in Housing Court).

On November 28, 2011, the City of New York moved for a preliminary injunction to oust the occupiers at Zuccotti Park. The motion was denied.

By 6:30 a.m., the attorneys representing both sides had met with the City’s attorneys, the lawyers representing the protesters, and the City’s lawyers, and had reached a settlement. The City promised to lift the barricades and let people enter and leave the building. We had enough food and water to continue their protest in the park, and permitted them to reenter with their tents and sleeping bags. The Order was held, and then, only after a warrant was issued and served on the Marshall. Even more importantly, the law of this State has been settled for over sixty years: no violence can be used to carry out an eviction.

So we are left with the City’s claim that it was authorized to remove the protestors pursuant to its general police powers. However, an examination of the facts in the case shows otherwise. We must not ignore the Mayor’s admission, on prime time television, that Brookfield did not ask for the City’s intervention until after the Mayor and his Police Commissioner had already decided, over the November 12th /13th weekend, to evict the protesters and that the “request” to intervene was solicited by the Mayor. Also, not to be ignored is that the so called “rules” allegedly issued by the owners of Zuccotti Park, which the City was offered to enforce, were changed after the occupation started but before the eviction, possibly in anticipation of the eviction. The entire rationale by the City was that the police could only act if they were threatened with the destruction of the park that after the attack at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, when the conditions in lower Manhattan were undeniably unsafe and unsanitary, the City encouraged people to return to their homes and work despite the deplorable conditions resulting from the attack.

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

What the City was apparently seeking was an evidentiary hearing on the allegation that there were unsafe and unsanitary conditions in the park sufficient to justify the City’s actions. When I retired as a Judge in December 2010, I was the senior judge in the City Part, handling cases to which the City was a party. I handled many TROs against the City, as did the two other judges who were assigned to that Part. While there are no hard and fast rules, the vast majority of us would have held a hearing to determine if the allegations of “unsafe” and “unsanitary” conditions were supported by evidence. Such evidence would be in the form of documents and sworn testimony where each side would be given the right to call witnesses and cross examine the other side. If the City were able to provide a sworn affidavit alone, would not have been absent. Such a hearing, the claims are merely unproven allegations, and thus insufficient to justify the City’s actions.

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

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

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

So it was that I found myself a few weeks later, drinking bad coffee at nine in the morning next to our new provost, Tim Marshall, alongside architects and administrators—who nervously eyed the other student representatives and me—looking over various blueprints that the venerable architectural...
The subsequent denial by Justice Stallman of essentially the same relief granted by Justice Billings earlier in the day, did not render Justice Billings' original order invalid during those morning hours on November 15. At the very least, any and all arrests of persons who tried to reenter the Park after the City was served or made aware of Justice Billings' Order, should be vacated and dismissed.

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

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

Karen Smith is a recently retired New York State Acting Supreme Court Justice. Justice Smith is not serving on the legal team representing OWS before Justice Stallman. This is offered without any judgmen- tion purposes and not to second guess or criticize any of the legal work which has so valiantly been done to date.

SARAH RESNICK
November 15, Courtroom

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

—Bloomberg

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

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

Of course the evicted was not really a surprise; that it hadn't happened sooner was perhaps more surprising. For their part, the OWS legal working group, in collaboration with a team of lawyers from the National Lawyers Guild, had long been preparing for this moment. The first thing they did was call a judge—in this case, Justice Lucy Billings, who, as the news media were quick to point out, had spent a few years working at the ACLU. Despite the late hour, Justice Billings drew up a Temporary Restraining Order barring the police from evicting protesters who were not breaking any laws, and also from enforcing rules made after the protests started. The court meant the police could not prevent protesters from reentering the park with tents and other personal belong- ings. At around 4:45 AM, the application for the Temporary Restraining Order was faxed to the City and the OWS legal team invited representatives from both Brook- field and Bloomberg's office to discuss the proposed order. They failed to respond. ("It was in the middle of the night!" they would say in court. "There was the eviction attack.") The order was signed by Justice Billings sometime around 6:30 AM. The city was served with this order at 7:50 AM.

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

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

Being temporary, as it was, there was a time limit on the TRO, which asked that a show cause hearing take place by 11:30 AM the next morning. And the hearing was scheduled. Were the City to demon- strate that it had legal grounds to evict the protesters, the order would be nullified, and the eviction upheld. The City selected a different judge to hear the case, report- edly via randomized computer software. He was Justice Michael Stallman. As a friend later explained to me, this didn't bode well for the protesters: As a judge in the City Court system, Stallman had found in favor of the City time and time again. During the hearing, he revealed that he is a resident of the financial district and had for a long time served on Community Board One.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our December 2008 occupation received letters of support from Greek labor unions, from the Chicago factory workers who were striking, and from students everywhere, particularly UC Berkeley, where students were gearing up for their own occupation in protest against a 33 percent tuition hike. We received emails from people like Clemson University philosophy professor and anarchist Todd May, who wrote: "Too often, in our world, we are told that politics is dead, that resistance is useless, and that public action is nothing more than an exercise in nostalgia. We are told that we live in a post-political world, where we must compromise with those who would oppress us and must subordinate ourselves to those who would manage our lives for us. These past few days you have shown, as others in Europe, in Latin America, in Asia and Africa seek to show, that politics is not dead, that resistance is
about the judge. Was anyone familiar with his career history? Apparently not. I had left anything resembling paper at home and pulled out a brown paper bag—remnants from breakasts—with which to take notes. The girl next to me pulled out a spiral-bound notebook and tore off a few sheets for me. They were tiny, but they would do. It was now nearly 1PM. Soon thereafter Judge Stallman, a slight man with a soft white beard and almost goofy grin, entered the courtroom and arguments began. OWS was represented by nine counsel from the National Lawyer’s Guild. The petitioner was a woman named Jennifer Waller. There were others, too, but they were unnamed. Additionally, counsel representing the Transit Workers’ Union and Working Family Party made an application to participate in the oral arguments—they were intervening on behalf of themselves and in support of the protesters. So first there was a question of standing: Could a union and political party legitimately petition on behalf of the movement? (I couldn’t help but think that at least some people in the movement felt the same way.) The NLG argued that they could—members of both groups had been actively involved in OWS even if they didn’t sleep in the park. In the end, they were met with no opposition from the City. In their argument, they heard. At issue was whether the eviction of Liberty Square impinged on the protest- ers’ First Amendment protections. The lawyer who spoke most eloquently on behalf of OWS was Alan Levine. I only ever saw the back of his head. He had a full head of white hair and wore a suit. I thought it was olive green, it might have been gray. Brookfield was trying to make this into a private case. The NLG argued that the presence of the occupation claimed the space as protected by the First Amend- ment at the time the rules were estab- lished. “They created rules after the fact in order to limit activity. Those rules were made six weeks ago. This is a profound response to speech activity.” If the park owners wanted to implement rules, they should impinge on speech as minimally as possible. If the concerns were really over fire hazards (the presence of fuel- based generators and cigarette butts; also, the tents were blocking park exits) and sanitation (human waste, mostly trash too), were there no other means to address them? Why were the protesters not afforded the opportunity to address these grievances? For one, they had already shown a good faith effort to deal with these issues responsibly. They had new restroom facilities (a nearby ground-floor space with rented Port-a-Pottys) and a new bike-powered generator to replace the fuel-based one. There was no particu- lar emergency that morning, the NLG lawyers argued. The protesters had done nothing to provoke the police to enter en masse, in the middle of the night, and with such violent means.

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

NO

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

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

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

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

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

Later that afternoon, the OWS text alert system sent out a message announc- ing victory: The judge had decided in favor of the protesters, and the restraining order against the City and the NYPD would be upheld! Hooray! This turned out to be false. What Justice Stallman did say—and the double negative is confusing—was that OWS legal counsel ‘did not demonstrate that the rules adopted by Brookfield Proper- ties are not reasonable time, place and manner restrictions permitted under the First Amendment.” The ruling was made under the assumption that the park was in fact a public forum and thus that uphold- ing the First Amendment must be con- sidered. And so: that was that. No more tents or sleeping bags. No more sleeping at the park. No more twenty-four-hour occupation.

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

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

What was it three years later that suddenly made it okay to Occupy? Was it the occupation itself—more dramatic, more clearly connected to the broad impact of the economic crisis beyond the context of our private university? Was it that people had become angrier about the inability of Congress to deal with the recession? Was it that radical politics finally seemed justified in a situation where no other form of politics was effective? Perhaps, if we want to be self-congratulatory, our New School in Exile movement shook things up a bit and created the space for that radicalism. Or maybe it just has to do with the simple fact that, thanks to the convenient location of a 24-hour McDonald’s down the street on Broadway, the occupiers of Zuccotti Park had the one crucial element that our movement never possessed: a bathroom. Having finished my master’s, I’m no longer at The New School, so I don’t know what prompted my faculty to support this occupation, when the previ- ous one had seemed out of bounds. Maybe it’s just easier to accept criticism when it isn’t your own backyard.
out for the walkout; students as a group unto themselves had not yet begun to organize across schools. Student activists had been a presence in some universities for a long time: The New School had had previous occupations, various activist groups had already existed at NYU, and CUNY students had already been organizing for a walkout. But those groups had been isolated on those individual campuses—and lying dormant on many others, especially at smaller schools such as Julliard, Pratt, and some of the CUNY campuses.

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

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

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

There were instances when individual schools were facing problems and the connections that had been made through the assembly paid off in the form of cross-university solidarity. On November 21, when the CUNY Board of Trustees met at Baruch College to hold an open-forum about upcoming tuition hikes, members of the all-city student assembly were there, standing with their CUNY peers to protest the increasing cost of public education. As a student at NYU, I had never had any contact with CUNY students until the October 15 assembly, but I was at Baruch that night. I stood with my nose pressed to the glass windows of the building, watching as NYPD officers beat and arrested my fellow students for staging a peaceful sit-in. And when the Board met again a week later, I returned, this time to find a noticeably larger crowd composed of students from an even more diverse collection of schools.

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

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

But now that we have the connections and the organizational structure, we need to figure out what to do with them. Occupy Wall Street is responsible for creating many different groups and general assemblies, and the student assembly is one of them. Before September 17, there was no student movement, but our connections to Zuccotti Park have lessened since it first brought us together.
Our autonomy can be a strength. Without our ability to organize events and see them through to fruition, none of what we have done so far would have been possible. And yet, we cannot forget our origin. At key moments in the movement’s history, students have mobilized not as an autonomous group, but simply as members of OWS. On days of action, at labor rallies, when Zuccotti Park was evicted in the middle of the night, when Sotheby’s workers picketed on auction nights, when a family re-occupied a foreclosed home in Brooklyn, students came out in large numbers and lent their energy, as well as their vocal chords, to struggles that were greater than just one group of people.

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

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

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

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

The next morning I had to leave around 10 AM to go to work (I work as a babysitter as well as a cook in a restaurant). I arrived back on site at around 9pm. A lot had changed in the house that day. It was away, “the wave doesn’t do you – or anyone else – much good, because when you give up responsibility, you also give up agency. For decades now, the subtext of our economic policy and the 99%, but when it comes to enacting change in your own neighborhood, it’s not always so clear-cut. Perhaps this is especially true in New York; according to the US Census Bureau, 69% of the households in New York City are inhabited by renters, more than any other major US city. In a town full of renters, the fight for affordable housing is not just about homeowner and banks: we are often fighting amongst ourselves.

For decades now, the subtext of our neighborhood battles has been the seemingly unstoppable process of gentrification and displacement. Whether you’re riding the wave of gentrification or it’s sweeping you away – or you’ve been left bobbing in its wake – the sense that the city is on a set path can lead you to a feeling of helplessness. “Where else am I going to go?” I’ve heard many a young gentrifier say, refusing to be held up the house and setting up systems for the night and the next morning. OWS was very proud of myself, jumping over the of OWS Sanitation taught me and another used a generator for electricity. A member of OWS Sanitation did an excellent job cleaning up the house and setting up systems for power and water.

In the early stages, and we are still figuring out how best to use our particular role as students while also contributing to the movement as a whole. At NYU, a lot of the work that we are doing is still outreach—talking to students about why their individual problems are part of a larger issue and opening them up to the possibility of real, tangible change.

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

OCCUPY MN

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

For the next several hours, we held a rally around the tents in which bullhorns were passed among those who had chosen arrestable action as well as those who stood in the crowded outer perimeter. Extemporaneous speakers included veterans, foreclosee victims, a union steward, a novice catholic priest, medical and social service providers, and a theology professor. Several people who had argued against the tent action at the previous two nights’ general assemblies brought food and water to those in the inner circle, sat in temporarily to provide room for a quick run to the port-a-potty, and ran messages. Gradually, several dozen real tents rose up in the center, and the circle pushed out to accommodate them. Participants dutifully called and tested and tweeted and updated their Facebook pages, and the crowd grew steadily as the evening turned to night. Someone announced that our Livestream feed had been picked up by the OW3’s and Global Revolution channels, and a huge cheer rose up. That morning we had all paid close attention as the massive show of force at Zuccotti Park had made Bloomberg flinch — and now it was our turn, and New York was watching us. At 9pm I called my wife to tell her that the Sheriff’s office had given us a five minute warning, and that I would very likely be spending the rest of the night in jail. By 1 AM, it had started to drizzle, most supporters had gone home, and I crawled into my tent thinking we would make it through the night. By 2:30, the personal tents had been confiscated, the make-shift ones destroyed, and — with nobody arrested — a group of 50 or so had convened an emergency meeting to discuss our next steps. Exhausted but energized, we consensued that we should take another stand as soon as possible, maybe even the next night, and then most of us went home to sleep in our beds.

That moment was, in my view, an early high point for OccupyMN, and marked an important crossroads for its further development. For better or for worse, we didn’t take another stand about the tents until November 29, when a much smaller group made a noble effort to defend a group of tents set up on the pavement of the North Plaza. The images on Livestream and Facebook were picturesque — snow falling gently on an encampment covered with signs boasting the divisiveness of the occupation’s constituency — but when the deputies were done carting away the tents in the early hours of the following morning, it effectively marked the end of the physical occupation as such. In the intervening weeks, OccupyMN accomplished a great deal, leading the nation in what has become an essential shift for many cities, away from centralized camps on public property and towards scattered occupations in defense of foreclosed homes. We also struggled during that time to come to grips with the limitations of the General Assembly and the other de facto organizing conventions that had gotten us through the first month or so.

Like many of the occupations that appeared in the weeks after OWS set up camp in lower Manhattan, we reflexively reproduced much of what we had seen in New York, quickly establishing a GA, working groups for food, sanitation and teach-ins, etc., a library full of leaflets from political economy and feminism courses at UM, and a Livestream channel. Almost from the beginning, however, the Minneapolis occupation took on a different character from OWS, insofar as the nightly GA and most of the essential working groups that reported to it were largely made up of people who were not — or were only very amenable to actually sleeping on the plaza. This, in turn, was at least partially a result of negotiations between the county and the group of organizers who had chosen the site. That agreement, which allowed the occupation use of city power and a permit to place port-o-potties on the premises, seemed specifically aimed at restricting the possibility of a long-term settlement, largely by laying out a strict stipulation against tents. It also established a line of regular communication between those organizers and representatives from the county, including the commissioners’ council and the sheriff’s office.

By the third night’s GA, strong lines were drawn between those who wanted to honor the original agreement, and those who did not recognize the authority of the organizers to enter into an agreement and believed that the occupation needed to have a real camp in order to function meaningfully. The question of whether, and how, we should fight for the right to pitch tents became grounds on which a motley crew of activists with a broad account I heard in his class the year before and I don’t think he used the word privatization this time either. Instead the conversation turns to Berkeley’s being shielded from the fiscally (and morally) sinking state of California. Another student asks how we, as future applicants on the job market, might be affected. My head throbs. Since before I went back to school I’ve been reading about the diminishing value of a PhD, the cramped and competitive market for humanities scholars, the high attrition rate of ABDs. I am in debt from my undergraduate years (oh, but I am also indebted to my undergraduate years): the job market is exactly what I don’t want to think about. So I tell my professor that, while I agree it’s a problem, there’s little anyone can do about it, and she also considers it trivial.

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

Later that night I listen to my voicemail on my way to BART: A friend has called to see if I’m all right. He says he heard things had gotten out of hand. It’s then that I notice the helicopters that have been hovering over campus all day. That was a real change. What is the event?

KATHRYN CRIM

Bulldozers of the Mind

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

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

In the late afternoon, the courtyard is a patchwork of sun squares. The café tucked next to the museum entrance faces south to the city and attracts many people unaffiliated with the university. It occurs to me, we have very well removed ourselves to the edge of campus. One student, who has apparently attended the noon rally, is wearing a bright green sign like a cape. The professor gives a short talk on the UC budget. It is more or less the same
range of political and cultural commitments began to work through the often painful process of coalition building. At the same time, we were still struggling with the basic mechanics of the GA process, arguing nightly about racial and gender dynamics, which had signals to use, and how to conceptualize consensus. Nonetheless, the tent action of October 15 was decided upon at the GA two days before, less than a week after the occupation began, by a large group that, buoyed by mild temperatures during the meetings, was able to reach a compromise. It was the OccupyMN General Assembly meeting at its best, improvising a process that allowed us to come to a practical decision about an immediate concern. It was also the last time that the GA ever met in that spirit.

The following night, with no tents up and most of the participants from the previous day’s action sitting the meeting out, the GA passed the chance to affirm a coordinated act of defiance regarding the tents, and with the weather finally getting blustery, started to look like the GAs that have been held almost every day since then. Those assemblies, which soon began to meet awkwardly in the “public” skyways that connect the commercial and financial buildings of downtown Minneapolis and make it possible, possibly for the first time, to go from one to the other without being characterized by a tension between two kinds of meetings that were trying to happen simultaneously. One was the operations and communications meeting among working groups concerned with increasingly contentious details around finance, media, and messaging, largely made up of people who weren’t sleeping downtown. The other was the more logistical meeting, mostly white occupiers defending the home of an African-American woman who was using the mostly-black neighborhood and all parties reported remarkably positive and open dialogue around race, community organizing, and activism. In South Minneapolis, 200 people showed up to re-open a house that had been taken from an adjunct UMN Anthropology professor and faced down the police, refusing to allow them to approach the house to board it up, and holding the occupation for 24 hours before the door was opened, and the occupiers removed. Most recently, as part of the national Occupy-Our-Homes day of action, we pledged to defend the home of a Vietnam marine veteran who was facing eviction on a home he has lived in since 1968 that is valued at one-fifth of what he still owes on his mortgage, and we received (mostly) positive recognition by national and international mainstream media outlets. Locally based US Bank has shown signs that it is paying attention, issuing increasingly-panicked sounding internal memos and bungling its attempts to spin the story. People – and, importantly, the people than were showing up downtown in October – are starting to get used to the idea of defying unjust laws and standing together in one another’s defense. Who would have thought it would be possible to make those kinds of claims just a few months ago?

Of course, none of the foreclosure actions have been democratically or transparently organized. Their leaders have largely abandoned the GA as part of their decision making process. Instead, they are working with unions and neighborhood organizing groups – groups with staff and experience and knowledge about how to run a phone bank, build a network of supporters, and actuate that network when it is necessary to deliver a crowd to put the muscle behind a demand. Many occupiers have expressed concern about this reality, and some have been critical of the actions’ focus on media spectacle or the ways in which they risk reinforcing a problematic emphasis on single-family home ownership. Very few would argue, however, that the actions have not been a huge success, both by pushing public discourse to think about the second most important site of material exploitation as a site of struggle (occupy your job is coming), and by simply giving us something to believe that we as a movement, exist. Meanwhile, we are working out the details of how to have a sort of constitutional assembly this winter. Maybe it will produce a spokesperson, or a refigured GA, or a way of thinking about coalitions among different groups that aren’t directly accountable to one another. Some will no-doubt mourn the passing of the dramatic and infuriating General Assembly as the radical organ of democratic participation, and the utopian-communitarian project of the centralized occupation. It seems to, however, that as we are beginning to make the conceptual adaptations necessary to bring our movement into its adolescence. Now there are all of these people who have lived through and participated in the ecstatic constitutive moment. They are people for whom the challenges of radical democratic participation are no longer only abstractions, and who are now ready to, precisely, participate in figuring out how to become a movement. If that is being reproduced across the country – and how could it not be – then at the end of the Autumn of 2011, I am exhausted, but honestly excited, for the first time, about the political possibilities of the moment in which I live.

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

The cops, still dressed for a riot, are standing on the steps as if to protect the building from seizure and pillage. They are back-lit by the floodlights that were trying to happen simultaneously. There’s a California dream that goes something like this: a kid from a rural county graduates from high school and goes to Merced Community College then transfers to Cal State Fresno. He does really well and after a year or two transfers again, this time to one of the UCs. Maybe Berkeley. He is taught by some of the most prestigious professors in the country. He goes on to get a PhD and be hired by a great private college on the East Coast. I like this dream a lot. It has many iterations; it has many mirrors. It’s poster-perfect, and it carries no price tag.

There’s another dream for which you can find the film footage: The dream isn’t of 1964, when Mario Savio stood on the steps of Sproul and called for a kid from a rural county graduates from high school and goes to Merced Community College them to transfer to Cal State Fresno. He does really well and after a year or two transfers again, this time to one of the UCs. Maybe Berkeley. He is taught by some of the most prestigious professors in the country. He goes on to get a PhD and be hired by a great private college on the East Coast. I like this dream a lot. It has many iterations; it has many mirrors. It’s poster-perfect, and it carries no price tag.

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...
path for the arrests. A low chanting in the background can be heard: Shame, shame. That period of calmed agitation, which is also a strange, orderly distress, seems to me to be something like a figure for the present moment. The camera doesn’t know how it will turn out, whether the crowd will disperse or gather together again. It doesn’t know that eventually they will come together to avenge with a hortatory chant, that this will persuade the police to gather, too, and retreat. It doesn’t know that the following night as Chan

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has been and continues to be realized every day against, for example (and it is only one example), young black men. I am told that the tuition hikes have been a long time coming; that the erosion of at least one California dream has been and continues to be realized every day against, for example (and it

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

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For me and for many others, these strategic models provided necessary guid-

ance and structure when we were learning how to effectively fight for social change. In my experience, however, they can also invite a certain level of doctrinal rigidity (the title of Alinsky’s “Rules for Radicals” is fairly explicit about that invocation). Yet here we were at Occupy, our numbers swelling against the challenges Occu

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

As our direct action working groups swell, bolstered by the new availability of activists previously preoccupied with the day-to-day needs of encampment working groups like safety and sanitation, we are also beginning to accumulate enough organizing strength to contemplate the kind of sustained, targeted campaign work that could affect change on problematic local issues. Here, too, there are plenty of examples of practices that beg for change: Mayor Michael Nutter’s racist curfew, or Philadelphia’s embarrassing record of cutting tax abatement deals on corporate development projects like the Comcast building. This is where the information contained in strategic campaign work trainings becomes an asset rather than a liability, with the potential to guide us forward rather than limit our work. In transmitting this knowledge, unions and organizations like Jobs with Justice can continue to be helpful partners in the work of building Occupy. We have learned the valuable lesson that Occupy does not need to be a campaign, and it is energizing and exciting to realize that this movement is nearly positioned to run one without being subsumed by it.

Brandon Harris

On November 21st, the day before I boarded a MegaBus in midtown Manhattan so I could spend Thanksgiving in my hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio and exactly one month after Occupy Cincinnati’s encampment had been raided (and twenty-three arrested), McClatchy published an article titled “Highest income-inequality tract is gentrifying.” It detailed how a new Census Bureau report revealed that Census Tract 17, made up of the northernmost portion of Cincinnati’s largely blighted, historically significant Over The Rhine neighborhood, had the most significant gap between its richest and poorest citizens of any neighborhood in the country. With over two-thirds of its 321 households earning less than $10,000 a year, three percent of the households taking in between $100,000 and $150,000 a year and another three percent taking in over $200,000 annually, there is no place in the United States where you’re likely to see crushing poverty within short walking distance from leisurely affluence. And now the hipsters were moving in.

I’ve spent a significant amount of time in Tract 17 over the last year and a half. Frequently the lone person of color among a largely white social circle, one which stretches back to my days attending some of the city’s most vaunted schools, one desperate summer of making a feature film and a series melancholy holidays have brought me back to the apartments and saloons of gentrification frontiersmen who’ve taken to the lower part of Mt. Auburn or the northern reaches of Over The Rhine, just north of Liberty Street.

That this extreme socioeconomic stratification exists in such close quarters is, of course, not news to anyone who lives in or has spent significant time in the area. And it is especially not news to me, since I’ve routinely lived for the past decade on less than $10,000 a year in Cincinnati. It is much more expensive than Cincinnati, while having been educated within and employed by institutions that give me the opportunity to make close friends and have vague acquaintanceships with people who make much, much more.

Visiting some of the individuals who live on Cincinnati’s gentrification frontier the weekend after Thanksgiving, conversation turned to Tract 17 and the gentrifiers in new communities they have brought me back to the apartments. I’ve spent a significant amount of time in the United States where you are likely to see crushing poverty within short walking distance from leisurely affluence, but now largely ignored, race problem. The city center leans moderately progressive, surrounding precincts, much less so. In the wake of former Lehman Brothers Managing Director and current Ohio Governor John Kasich’s stirring defeat on SB5, which would have limited collective bargaining rights for Ohio public sector workers, the city elected its seemingly most progressive mayor in a generation, with seven Democrats out of nine members, and for the first time ever, a majority of blacks. Still, House Speaker

Geoffrey Wildanger

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

I write this on the day that the UC Regents will meet via teleconference to decide whether to raise UC tuition by 81 percent. They originally planned to hold the meeting last week in San Francisco but rescheduled due to fears of too many protesters. Their fears were well justified. The general assembly to hold the meeting last week in San Francisco but rescheduled due to fears

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Over Occupy Cincinnati

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

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

The violence of the police on my campus has unified the community in a way I have never before seen. Hundreds of alumni drove in to attend a rally. Children from a local school baked cookies for those pepper-sprayed. Thousands or so had participated in a series of recent marches and instances of street theater, at actions directed at major local mortgage lender Fifth Third Bank, and in various Fountain Square rallies. Jesse Jackson happened by Piatt Park one evening and gave a surprisingly stirring speech, which emblazoned many to reoccupy the space.

Fifteen protesters were arrested that night when they refused to leave after it closed. Jackson came back to congratulate them the following afternoon, by which time only a few of those arrested had been released.

Still, Occupy Cincinnati couldn’t manage to stage an Occupy Our Homes action on Tuesday December 6th. Too few foreclosed homeowners could be found to walk in the line of fire to preempt the preponderance of foreclosed homes in central Cincinnati neighborhoods like Avondale, Madisonville, Roselawn and Bond Hill, all of which have endured long bouts of economic and infrastructural decline. On its Facebook page, Occupy the Hoof claimed to have found “OVER 30 TRASHED, ABANDONED, FOR- CLOSED HOMES IN THE AVONDALE AREA,” but the former occupants of those homes, the very people who need our help claiming them, had long abandoned the properties. Nevertheless, the memory sticks. Instead occupiers teamed up to beautify the properties, so as to restore them to livability for the ostensibly itinerant folks who used to live there, should they be found.

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On Thanksgiving Day in Cincinnati, I often find myself at a few dinner tables. This is perhaps not so uncommon, especially for the expatriate children of increasingly fractured, middle class, black American families. There is work to do, campaign stops to make (“Yes, we’re all fine, thanks for asking”), food and football to digest, but perhaps not the communion one would think the holiday meant for. I was happy because I felt proud. I felt proud to be a UC Davis student and a member of a community that was suddenly so unified.

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

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

It brings me to my favorite phrase associated with the UC struggle: “You will never be lonely again.”

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

We occupy so that we can change human nature.

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

I was happy because, after being pepper-sprayed, in terrible pain, we stood together and marched the cops off the quad, chanting, “You can go.” I was happy because I felt proud. I felt proud to be a UC Davis student and a member of a community that was suddenly so unified.
politicians and racist police forces, but also the very white liberals that often spearhead the gentrification of their communities. No paternalism goes unnoticed here.

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

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

Who does not have some sort of criminal background? No one. If one looks around parts of Over the Rhine, one would be hard pressed to find a young black man who does not have some sort of criminal record, usually for the slightest of offenses. The stakes for second or third time offenders from the black underclass, who nearly never have access to their own legal representation other than court appointed counsel, nearly never have access to their own legal record, usually for the slightest of offenses.

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I. New Alliances in New York

The space on the second floor of 90 Fifth Avenue was (and is) a fairly bland and sterile study center for the New School, but for eight days it was transmogrified as “donkey kong” by other occupiers. In roared John Ford, heart-on-his-sleeve, vegan, punk rocker and Occupy Boston classic, whose more ferocious displays of commitment were characterized as “donkey kong” by other occupiers. He pulled up to the site in his military ambulance, the back loaded with cranberry crates filled with books. He had packed up a third of his personal collection of Metametacon books in Plymouth, MA—the shop he runs—a military tent and other supplies, and landed with impact at Dewey Square (read his account at therovinghouse.com), giving the library greater presence on site.

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

Monday, November 21st was the last day of the Week of Action, and in many ways the actions and events of that day captured our new shared terrain. In the morning, members of the NYC Student Assembly and the OWS Student Debt Working Group met at Zuccotti Park to launch Occupy Student Debt, a national student debt refusal pledge that will prompt a collective default if one million people sign on. These were for the most part private school students taking aim at the financial institutions that impose upon themselves, conditioned by culture and habit, and sail past them. We must be bold, we must take risks, we must add to our ranks. The active portion of the 99 percent is to include men in the northern reaches of Over the Rhine and densely disenfranchised people of color all over this country, it will require no small amount of courage, empathy and commitment from everyone involved in our struggle to make them feel welcomed and secure and appreciated.

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

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How can we bring these powerful images to the city’s police establishment and as unemployable by the posh new criminals by the city’s police establishment?
three units joined forces to form a library working group. We’re made up of at least 20 librarians, many who are Simmons College library grads with a range of skills. I’m an archivist and bring an interest in preservation strategies, so we might actually archive the movement as it happens.

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

The tent had one comical irritant—the tough velcro strap at the entrance would snatch knitted caps off our visitors, decorat- ing the door with a colorful woolen bunting. People often ducked in through the tent flaps, sigh and say “I LOVE library-ies!” Patrons checked out books on a card catalog slip, simply writing down the title, and walked away, beaming, with a book or two under their arm. Our current catalog has over 100 books checked out.

Like most reference librarians, often day-to-day work was often shelved in order to respond to queries. Eager high school students would come in, wide eyed and nervous, clutching video cameras and pages of interview questions. Families with children would pore around curiously. Pairs of ladies, coat lapels covered with activist buttons would tiptoe in together, sharing their knowledge and quizzing mine. Authors would speak at the lecture series and drop off their books. One couple told us we were going to suffer an earthquake and should vacate the area immediately. I sometimes felt like some sort of therapist, and spent a lot of time listening to people share their ideas for that its effects are acutely felt each year. Since 2006, tuition has risen from $6,600 to $13,360, class sizes have expanded at the same time that classes have become harder to get into, departments and programs have been cut, and the proportion of out-of-state students has grown. In response to this academic restructuring—designed to convert a public good into a private commodity—students, faculty, and community members have gathered in solidarity each fall to challenge the state’s privatization and disinvestment of what is widely considered the world’s greatest public university system. But this year was different, and it is no small part due to the Occupy movement.

The Occupy Effect first became apparent to me when I received the talking points packet given to graduate student activists who make in-class presentations to undergrads about the cuts and planned actions. I’d given this presentation in previous years and the script was always the same—simply piling on the latest statistics about deepening cuts, ascending fees, and obscene salary increases for administrators. However, this year’s script did not just calculate the latest casualties, but instead radically re-framed the discussion of public education around the issues and discourses at the heart of the Occupy movement. First, it pointed out that the latest round of cuts were a product of Wall Street’s reckless decisions: “Q. Does anyone know how much funding has been cut from CA public education since 2009 at the peak of the crisis caused by Wall Street?: A. $17 Billion.” Second, it debunked the myth that there is simply no money to maintain the UC system: “Q. Does anyone know how the super-rich have done during this time? A. Because of our bailouts, American corporation’s average profits rose 29.2 percent in 2010. In 2010, average CEO pay rose 23 percent, for an average of $1.4 million.” Third, it acknowledged the cost-shift: “Q. Who

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

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

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

III. Re-articulating Education

What the Occupy movement has brought to light, in the cases of the New York and Berkeley student movements, is that the privatization and financialization of education are connected processes at the heart of neoliberalism. This recognition has shifted the student movement discourse from a narrow conversations about tuition to a broader one about a system of corporate predation that makes higher education unaffordable, inaccessible, and reliant on unsustainable debt-financing and speculation. Today both public and private institutions are complicit in the general reproduction of structures of social inequality: through privatization (shifting the cost of education from the public to “consumers”) and financialization (the increasing reliance on debt to finance education), traditionally marginalized and working class communities are further excluded from higher plan of action that included a phone tree and safe houses for the collection. After “Sinkgate” (in order to address sanitation issues, some MIT friends designed a self-contained sink, which the police refused to let into camp, almost causing a riot) we began to feel more nervous about the longevity of the camp, though we continued our normal planning. We reconsidered cataloging, as we watched the awful raids happening at other occupations across the country. Once we learned that the restraining order against the City of Boston and Boston Police Department was lifted, we knew how vulnerable we were. That night, while some of us attended a huge General Assembly, librarian Anna Rothman sat in the tent, diligently cataloging over 800 books in a few hours. Amazing! (This quick cataloging was made possible through LibraryThing.com—a way of barcode scanning books). We packed up the “vital documents”—Occupy Boston’s organizational documents that we’ve been archiving, ‘zines, pamphlets and other irreplaceable ephemera and moved them off site. We were reluctant to pack up books before an official eviction notice, as we didn’t want to appear like we were abandoning the camp. In fact, dur- ing some library meetings, we discussed...
surrounding the library with our bodies and leaving the books in place in the event of a raid, but we knew, in the end, that the police would destroy our collection, which was an unacceptable outcome. Each working group seemed to come to the same conclusion—that we’d protect our operations in such a way that we could re-assemble elsewhere, quickly.

The moment I received the call that we had 24 hours to evict, we decided to activate the phone tree. We thought about leaving one book behind—American Methods by Kristian Williams (which describes U.S. support of torture at home and abroad). I ran to my desk, shot off a few emails, cancelled upcoming appointments and called my husband so he’d know I didn’t plan on getting arrested. I zipped up the Mass Pike to Dewey Square, anxious but focused. By the time I arrived, about 45 minutes after the eviction phone call, the library collection was already waiting patiently on the sidewalk in its crates. We held up the library banner as we loaded our car and it blew proudly over us as we packed the trunk tight. The wooden cranberry boxes were loaded into John’s ambulance. One carload of books had already left. John was laughing at how fast the librarians mobilized, and the mood at camp was pretty jolly as we packed, all things considered. I think each Occupation probably reflects the character of its city and Boston, well, we strap on our boots and get shit done. We may not be asy like New York or LA, but we’re practical and we’ve got endurance. We built something beautiful together, and we’d break it down together with the same care and contribution. We were pulling together to save our assets. We were NOT going to let the police or the city of Boston determine or deter our course. We felt hopeful, despite the anger. By sundown the library was, stashed safely across the city, ready to be reassembled as Occupy Boston evolves into its next phase.

education, universities are turned into vehicles for capital accumulation, and the “1 percent” reap billions of dollars in profits from a growing student debt bubble. From this, a new political consciousness and a new counter-movement have at last emerged. These new alliances are challenging. They must work across class, gender, and racial divisions, must link up with ongoing struggles, and must be aware of their variegated, rich, and often painful histories. Our distinct histories and divisions can easily become political fissures when we do not take them on as the heart of new alliances. At CUNY, this means learning from the important heritage of black and Puerto Rican student struggles in the ’60s. It also means cultivating new alliances founded upon an understanding of the crisis of education as but one facet of the broader crisis of social reproduction under capitalism. It is in this way the struggle over education will to be re-articulated as one small but important aspect of the broader struggle over the future of our society.

Lili Loofbourow
DECEMBER 12 PORT SHUTDOWN

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

As we were about to set off, a sizeable motorcade of police cars, SUVs, and buses turned left. Lights ablaze, down Mandela Parkway. We didn’t know it then, but they would amass at Middle Harbor Shoreline Park and congregate around the mast of the USS Oakland, the first ship named for the Oakland in 1843. (Today’s crewmembers during its service in World War II, earning it the nickname “the lucky ship.”)

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

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

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

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

We started passing the fields of colored containers—branded, like cows sleeping in the dark—“24/7 Oakland Cargo Storage,” “Ocean Shipping.”

On the right we passed the U.S. Customs and Border Protection building, a derelict white shack partially obscured from view by the Port of Oakland’s massive cranes. The Port of Oakland, by its design, is a structure of rusted-over machinery, Mediterranean Shipping Company. On the left the port sealed its gates, the US Customs and Border Protection building, the rusted-over machinery. The HSX seal had partially peeled off the building, beheading the eagle, so that it looked like a crazy chicken with its head cut off. It was laying a “Homeland Security” egg.

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

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

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

There is an intellectual tradition which gave us these anxieties about privilege and exclusion, which seem to me to be traceable back to when the American political movements of the 1960s drifted into the academy. Many of those political movements took up the mantle of identity politics as a way of remaining relevant to the public sphere. Multiculturalism and its detractors both had their moments. Arguments about diversity and affirmative action raged. We had the still-weakly named “culture wars.” In this day and age though, it seems these debates have cooled off a little bit. Universities are expected to have diversity quotas, special programs for minority students, and affinity groups for anyone who feels affinity. The French philosophers, the critical theorists,
What follows, in terms of official encounters between protesters and police, is unremarkable: the police lined up in front of the terminal at 55-56 and watched while the protesters marched in a circle. At berths 30-32, the police poured out of a bus and stood in front of a thin line of protesters guarding the road, behind which two circles of protesters marched in front of the two berths. Some protesters were concerned that this was a recipe for kettling, but at no point did this happen. A man mediated in front of the police. Protesters (all of whom seemed to have a camera) filmed then, for no clear reason, the police got back in the bus and returned to the mast of the USS Oakland.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I glanced behind me to see if a second line was coming to surround the protesters. Nope. They stood there for some time, and then half of the officers (I’d venture there were about 100) went inside the terminal and shut the gate behind them, and stood on the other side of the gate.

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

I’m still mystified by this action, and the part of me that would have enjoyed a career in espionage despair that the fragment I overheard was about the police strategizing on getting their own people into the terminal. Especially since they could have gone another way (and did—several buses came in and out carrying police, without going past the protestor picket line).

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

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

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

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

Much like, dare I say it, a college campus, where you are constantly meeting new people and running into acquaintances by virtue of proximity, Zuccotti fulfilled a social function for the fledgling Occupy movement. The November 14th raid not only destroyed an external public face (which many have noted and the psychoanalysts gave us a vocabulary, whereby we now can interrogate the oppression coded into various discourses.

This is why OW’ers worry about shuffling women, and people of color to be first on the list of speakers (a.k.a. progressive stack) or whether a person of color has recently been a facilitator of the spokes council, or whether we are adequately reaching out to queer people. The concern is not for fairness. It is past fairness. Rather we are concerned about justice. The belief is that justice is achieved by a kind of affirmative action, the displacement of oppression through deliberate and systematic redress. And while OWS is not perfect just, it is something. Compare Jo Freeman’s account of bringing a resolution about women’s issues to the NCNP convention in 1967 with Manissa Maha rawal’s account of trying to change the wording of a declaration at OWS (see OCCUPY Gazette #1). It’s not that everyone came to OWS totally well-versed in the conventions of identity politics and political correctness, but unlike in OCCUPY Gazette #1). It’s not that everyone came to OWS totally well-versed in the conventions of identity politics and political correctness, but unlike in
was beginning to show signs of deformity) but also denied us an internal space, where, as on the green or quad of a college, you would meet your friends, their friends, talk about what you were up to, and make plans. OWS wants you to come over and hang out and talk about that thing we read. It wants to smoke weed and watch the cars drive by. It wants to eat pizza. And it wants to do so in a way that doesn’t make anyone feel bad. And while these are not necessarily rigorous impulses, they can be generative, as we have seen

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

There is a certain luxuriousness to this patience. It would be easy to read as the luxuriousness of the privileged, of people whose parents have enough money to keep them in low-stress, high-expectation pedagogical environments from birth ’til death. But I think it is also out of a desperation that this patient deliberative impulse comes. Anyone who has seen their peer grow impatient in a slow seminar, or been rebuffed by a university administrator knows that the world is not like the academy, that the relative ease of life the academy is a delu- sion. In the real world, people are excluded. Detractors are brushed off (and while some of us have certainly seen detractors brushed off at OWS, it does not come lightly). Thus, the internal world of OWS imagines itself as utopian. Especially without Zuccotti, the movement tries embrace itself. If it’s not clear already, I write about the traces of the collegiate in OWS with ambivalence because I find them both compelling and off-putting. College, in itself, is something to be ambivalent about: when we think of the failures of the academy, student debt immediately comes to mind, as well as the occlusion of the mentally ill, the homeless, and the other members of the true American lower classes from pristine University campuses. Further, we must acknowl- edge the people who work really hard in OWS who have not gone to college—won’t to go college, don’t really care about college (and who whom we ought not to exclude from our argument).

Collegiate OWSers have a lot of energy but are also tremendously impres- sionable. Their impressionability makes ‘grown-ups’ anxious, on the right and the left. I talked to a cop who said he was worried about young kids getting “converted” into believing in violent, anarchist tactics. A panel of older orga- nizers were very concerned about the movement being “co-opted.” But the “converted” into believing in violent, anarchist tactics. A panel of older orga- nizers were very concerned about the movement being “co-opted.” But the “converted” into believing in violent, anarchist tactics. A panel of older orga- nizers were very concerned about the movement being “co-opted.” But the “converted” into believing in violent, anarchist tactics. A panel of older orga- nizers were very concerned about the movement being “co-opted.” But the “converted” into believing in violent, anarchist tactics. A panel of older orga- nizers were very concerned about the movement being “co-opted.”

The college experience is often defined in opposition to the quote-unquote “American Dream,” and students are often told to remain engaged in the political process because they have the privilege to actually vote, rather than remaining apathetic or complacent. This is not necessarily an easy task, but it is important to remember that many college students are also deeply involved in political activism on a wide range of issues. The college experience is often characterized by a sense of idealism and a desire to make a difference in the world. However, it is also important to recognize that the college experience is not always positive and can often be frustrating and difficult. There are many struggles that students face, such as high tuition costs, student debt, and the overall cost of living. These struggles can make it difficult for students to stay engaged in the political process and can lead to feelings of frustration and apathy. It is important for students to remember that their voices and contributions are valuable and can make a difference in the world.
Finally, a word about the expulsion of men from Greenham after the first nine months. Among other things, this move emphasized violence as male. With the men gone from the occupation, the map of violence could be unambiguous. Peaceful female demonstra-
tors outside the base confronted a male death machine on the other side of the wire. It would be a great misunderstanding of how much good work feminist and queer
politics has done in the almost 30 years since Greenham to think that we can or should
draw such a simple diagram of good and evil again. But the fact that Occupy Wall Street
is meant to include everyone doesn’t offer any closure to the gender drama. Many have
experienced OWS’s as a largely male space. Some women feel like tokens, less heard, less
likely to be insiders in making decisions. Others have experienced sexual harassment.
Because the kinetic OWS keeps changing its population, its mores, its structures, its
locations, no generalization about sexism can hold. But, dear friends, “men” and “women,”
since we’re not going to take the short cut of gender separation this time around, con-
tant vigilance is in order. Sexism can be subtle. Sexism can seem normal. At Greenham,
discussion of sexism and violence was unceasing, and these discussions should remain
urgent for us now.

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

—Ann Snitow December 10, 2011

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

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

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

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

What I discovered has stirred my political imagination more than any activism since
that first, intense feminist surge 15 years ago. Though I still have many critical questions
about Greenham, I can’t help feeling about how to be joyously, effectively political in a conservative, dangerous time. Obviously this intense conversion
experience is going to take some explaining.

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

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

By the time they reached Greenham, however, the media silence had become galling. Four
women decided to claim themselves to the main gate of the base to force the world
to take notice. This act of protest has had children and grandchildren undreamed of by
the original, quite humble, and politically inexperienced Greenham marchers. Teachers,
farmers, nurses, and—yes—housewives, they had had no intention of staying at Green-
ham. But first the media took their time; then tents had to be set up and people informed.
A few days spent in support of the chained women lengthened to a week, then two.
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disconcerting to these observers is how this imagery half fits and half doesn't: women who look "ordinary" in some respects suddenly make radical breaks with things as they are. They are housewife-witches or mother-lesbians who insist on walking the cracks of standard female identities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The general action this particular night seems to be fence shaking. Hundreds of women are gathered under the powerful lights, shaking, keening, singing, talking, strolling up and down the perimeter, which is very close to the silos just at this point.

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

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

I did want to show up brute force as cruel, irresponsible, and finally useless, but the old gender exchange there at the fence was bound to obscure this more radical intention. Who was I—this outraged female, this moral mother hen? After all, what did I think we were doing? In spite of the singing, we meant business. We meant to criticize pushing...
people, to restrain ourselves from pushing back, but not to ask for the old forms of female quarter. I wonder if women are having to learn at Greenham—with a difference—what men learn too early and carry too far: the courage to dare, to test reaction, to define oneself again. Nonviolent direct action takes great courage. The big men on their horses or machines are doing as ordered—which is comfortable for them. In contrast, it can be truly terrifying to refuse to do what an angry, pushing policeman tells you to do. For women particularly, such acts are fresh and new and this cutting across the grain of feminine socialization is a favorite, daring sport of the young at the fence. Such initiations give women a revolutionary taste of conflict, lived out fully, in our own persons, with gender no longer a reliable determinant of the rules.

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

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

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

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

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

When I describe Greenham women, I often get the reaction that they sound like mad idealists detached from a reality principle about what can and cannot be done, and how. In a sense this is true. The women reject power and refuse to study it, at least on its own terms. But the other charge—that they are utopian dreamers who sit around and think about the end of the world while not really living in this one—is far from the mark.

In a piece in the Times Literary Supplement last summer, “Why the Peace Movement is Despairing,” the poster showed, of all things, a tall, square tower surrounded by flames and beginning to collapse. The image was drawn from the Tarot, and no doubt not intended literally. But gazing up at it as I was breathing in the ash from two towering symbols of corporate globalization, now reduced to smoldering rubble, left me feeling sick. Had our movement really been that dumb?

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

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

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

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

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

L.A. KAUFFMAN

After the Action: Reflections on the Global Justice Movement
Stephen Squibb

Neo Autonomia

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

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

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

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

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

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

And of course once we lost the element of surprise—the factor that made the WTO shutdown possible—we could never again actually prevent a summit meeting from happening. And even if we had, that in turn wouldn’t mean we had actually disrupted the forward progress of...
who tried to assert their dominance over the mass. The quality of this new revolutionary movement was, in fact, that the mass refused to be led in the traditional style, from above. It was, to a great extent, self-directing and self-organizing.

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

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

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

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Autonomy was a clearer departure from business as usual in Europe than it has been in the US, with the Occupy movement; an indigenous kind of autonomism has been part of American politics for decades. The American working class has been accused of lacking class-consciousness, but its annual mass abstention from voting suggests at least an awareness that it is not represented in electoral politics. This is the significant difference between the European and American cases: here neither of the dominant parties has ever honestly claimed to represent the interests of the workers. Occupy, like autonomy, emerged from the large gap between a political system that only represented a privileged minority and a fractured array of labor unions only able to represent a small fraction of workers.

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

Because they operated without the paternal guidance of social democratic parties, let alone the choke-hold of a Communist Party, the American labor movement was a "revolt against the very conditions of production itself," as C. L. R. James put it. In other words, while European workers' parties focused on meliorist truces between capital and labor, the American worker's freedom from the party meant that the radical wing of the labor movement focused on the lived experience of work itself. In this way, the American fixation on "work" in some respects became a source of radical strength: because they worked as hard as they did under the "Fordism" their country pioneered, American radicals also thought deeply about work itself, and the nature of labor became more central to their strategy than that of their European counterparts.

Such thinking led to a radical internationalism, without parties—an autonomous international, deriving from an immensely captivating, purely literal interpretation of the phrase "workers of the world." This internationalism motivated idiosyncratic kinds of organizing, such as that of the Wobblies, who brought unskilled, foreign-born, and minority workers into a union as part of their dream of creating "one big union" to cover the globe. This anti-vanguard position gained a clear articulation in James and Trotsky's 1938 debate on the "Negro Question." James had argued, against Trotsky, that far from needing to be led by the Communist Party, blacks would themselves advance the radical movement in America by fighting for their own rights on their own terms. James framed this corporate globalization in any meaningful way. We were so filled with adrenaline from the extraordinary events that unfolded on the streets that we missed something crucial: Just because you leave a protest feeling exu

Sarah Schulman

ACT-UP

Interviews with Larry Kramer and Gregg Bordowitz

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

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

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

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

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

Sarah Schulman: More at www.actuporalhistory.org

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

Larry Kramer: When did you first become aware of direct action?

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

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

Sarah Schulman: More at www.actuporalhistory.org
independence in Hegelian terms in his 1948 “Notes on Dialectics”: The coming of age of the proletariat means the abolition of the party. That is our new Universal stated in its baldest and most universal form.... The party as we have known it must disappear. It will disappear. It will disappear as the state will disappear. The whole laboring population becomes the state. That is the disappearance of the state... It withers away by expanding to such a degree that it is transformed into its opposite. And the party does the same. The state withers away and the party withers away. But... the primary thing is the withering away of the party, for if it does not... the state never will.

The rejection of the party and the proliferation of revolutionary subjects both are clearly present in the Occupy movement. The refusal of work, however, is almost impossible to locate; the one belief that protesters and their antagonists seem to have in common is that everybody should have a job. Cries of “Get a Job!” are always met with “I have one (or two, or three)” or “I’m trying!” The absence of a strong historical party formation has allowed American occupiers to embody the spirit of Autonomy while still preserving their attachment to labor.

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

If the content of the calls emanating from the occupations have been a cry for work rather than criticism of it, the initial form of the movement—local communities where one really could meditate in the morning, rally at noon, work the food tent in the evening, and study criticism after supper—tells a somewhat different story. In living together, differently, the occupiers struck, at the level of everyday life, against what Mario Tronti called the “social factory.” The space they created was, and is, expansive; as James once claimed, it did not merely accept individuals’ differences but in fact was constituted from them. In a 1944 letter to Constance Webb, he translated this dialectic into a classically American idiom:

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

Gregg Bordowitz

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

Sarah Schulman: Had you been tested at this point?

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

SS: So how did you get to ACT UP?

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

SS: So you got to Wall Street.

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

SS: Like what?

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

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

Symbols matter: “mic check,” the various consensus-related hand gestures, the occupation of public and semi-public spaces, the tents (where allowed), and also the attempt to postpone the NYSE morning bell. All this gave the movement the kind of personality and appeal it has. After three months however, it is time to ask whether symbols or symbolic struggle are enough. If they’re not enough, what should we do? Answers or at least partial answers come from the movement itself, but it is not always easy to see and name them. My suggestion: Look at the West Coast.

On November 2, Occupy Oakland organized a general strike in response to their eviction, and shut down the city’s port for a day. For December 12, a Port Blockade was organized at some of the nation’s busiest ports all along the west coast—from Anchorage, Alaska, to San Diego. In other words, occupations are becoming the center of political and social initiatives capable of attacking the direct economic interests of big companies and speculators. This offers rank and file workers the opportunity to join the struggle independently of the support of their union officials. I am not suggesting we mechanically apply models that are effective elsewhere. I am suggesting that we try to decipher the dynamic taking place in Oakland and consider whether we should follow a similar path here in New York, in our own way.

The December 6 day of action against foreclosures was an attempt to shift the focus from symbolic protest against financial capitalism to actions more concrete, taking back spaces and buildings. Considering the enormous economic and political power of private real estate interests in New York, and its related social consequences—for instance, the continual expulsion of working class people and people of color from gentrifying neighborhoods—the campaign against foreclosures pushes in the same direction as the port blockade: We are attacking the economic interests of capitalists and empowering those who are exploited and marginalized. This too explains why the struggle of CUNY students against tuition hikes is so important: In these struggles there is the seed for a national student movement for free education. Empowerment requires more than taking part in meetings, or having the opportunity to say what one thinks, or breaking some rule. It is also, importantly, a matter of gaining some victory: ending tuition hikes; gaining better rights and contracts for workers; arresting foreclosures; and taking back what has been stolen from working people, students, and all who are excluded, marginalized or disempowered at the hands of neoliberal and austerity policies.

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

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

+++ How democratic is consensus? Can we work together only if we all agree on what is to be done? Do we risk political homogenization if we fail to account for the possibility of persistent disagreement? Can we not consider the movement a process through which decisions are made despite disagreements, and with a resolve to work together regardless? I would favor a decision-making process that relies on majority vote, but one that combines with the consensus proves and encourages the discussion respectful of the reciprocal differences. Nothing prevents us from submitting the decisions we make to constant verification, testing them in practice and changing them if they prove wrong. The same holds for creating forms of coordination that use at least some partial elements of delegation. Student movements in France, for example, adopt forms of elective coordination at the national level. These coordinating bodies are subject to constant control and can be called off from below in every moment. In this way the student groups are capable of coordinating the struggle among different campuses on a national level and to share and expand effective strategies. The student movement in France is among the few social movements of the last years which effectively won battles—for example, the protest against the CPE (first employment contract) in 2006.

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

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

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

Finally, politics always has many protagonists with different agendas and different goals. The Occupy movement is not the only protagonist of political discussion and dynamic of these last months. Other agents are not just watching and waiting—they are acting. As the presidential election draws closer, the campaign machine will put a lot of pressure on the movement. The SEIU, who supported the Occupy movement, has endorsed Obama’s candidacy, and as a result on November 17 we marched on the sidewalk of the Brooklyn Bridge, instead of blocking the bridge, an idea which was circulating among protesters and occupiers in the previous weeks. In other words, and this is another question we should ask, what is a strategy for preserving the autonomy of the movement? Is the practice of consensus sufficient? Or should we not be talking, as we have started in the last weeks, about the concrete struggles, strikes, occupations to expand the movement from squares to communities, schools, consensus, then you had to do a certain amount of campaigning within the group. You couldn’t just come up with a speech that would sway hearts and minds on the floor on Monday night. You had to develop that speech, you had to develop that rhetoric, and you had to do a lot of face-to-face politicking along the way in order to gain consensus. I don’t think there’s anything ominous about this. This is how grassroots, democratic politics work. To a certain extent, this is how democratic politics is supposed to work in general. You convince people of the validity of your ideas. You have to go out there and convince people.

It was rolling. The feeling of ACT UP in its heyday—this was like 1988—when the room was packed, and you could hardly get into the ground floor of the Gay Community Center. If the weather was nice, the meeting spills out into the courtyard. There is business happening all over the place. It’s very difficult for the people who are actually running the meeting to get the attention of the group. There is all kinds of sexiness going on, as well. There is all kinds of cruising going on in the sides, and eye catching, and chattiness. There was an energy in the group that was amazing, because it was filled with people who had ideas, filled with people who had energies, filled with a kind of erotic energy. And all that came together. It was in some ways like a bazaar of desires. So it was amazing that anything got done. An enormous amount got done.
I first heard the slogan “Occupy Everything” in 2009 during the anti-eviction protests that shook the University of California, where I have been a graduate student since 2007. During the first weeks of the fall semester, that slogan gradually came to mean something specific, something razor-sharp, in a way that has been diluted in the present wave of protests. On September 24th, when students at UC Santa Cruz occupied the Graduate Student Community Center, “Occupy Everything” could be seen spray-painted on the side of the building. The same moment saw the publication of pamphlets and websites devoted to theorizing and propagating occupations, bearing the slogan, “Occupy Everything. Demand Nothing.” But it was the slogan of a vanguard, not the broad majority of protesters, and referred to the controversial tactic of forcibly locking down campus buildings with bike locks and barricades without any provision of demands or benchmarks for de-escalation. Occupations were a contentious tactic both inside and outside the organizing coalition, especially since the point wasn’t to force a negotiation with the administration, it was rather to block business as usual—and also, at least in theory, to wrench a parcel of space and time free from the capitalist order. This last point proved to be an Achilles heel for the UC occupations, since the occupiers had to rely on the very structures and temporalities of student protest they aimed to supersede. What they wanted was a commune—to communize, more specifically—but this would remain an elusive horizon during the first two years of campus revolt.

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

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

As springtime approaches, it will be vital to rethink the tactics of occupations together with the history of capitalism and class struggle. At present, some factions within the movement seem content with an amnesiac view of the camps and assemblies, which they regard as prefiguring a return to postwar progressivism. For example, the OWS Demands Working Group has called for “a massive public works and public service program with direct government employment at prevailing (union) wages, paid for by taxing the rich and corporations, by immediately ending all of America’s wars, and by ending all aid to authoritarian regimes to create 25 million new jobs.” While these are all fine things, they have as their premise the wrong assumption that some version of the welfare state represents a timeless form of the political and economic good. But the welfare state was only ever temporary, designed to serve a partisan set of interests—those of capitalists—and could not have been built save during a bygone period of capitalism’s global development, when the costs of welfare and high employment were capable of being offset by the profitability of modernizing production. Yes, the labor movement did force capitalists to internalize many of the costs of workers’ social reproduction, but it did this in an era of spectacular growth. Nothing could be further from the present scenario of capital and the state. The greatest expansion of the welfare state took place during capitalism’s golden age in the 1950s-60s: the point was not to build a good, equal, or just society, but rather to draw workers further into the system of production, extending that system to encompass nearly every aspect of lived experience. If the 20th century was the proletariat’s utopia, it was also its hell. As a point of fact, the amount of social and economic leverage we bring back into the daily life of everyday people is barely enough to breathe. Now there is only hell, bleak and disastrous. Capitalism has been failing since the late 1960s, when its previous temporary fix—the rapid modernization of production in advanced economies, coupled with reasonably generous social welfare—stopped doing the trick. If the welfare state beckons on the horizons of Zuccotti Park, it can only be a mirage, a trick of the light playing on the shields of the riot police. I don’t mean this as a trick. If the welfare state beckons on the horizons of Zuccotti Park, it can only be a mirage, a trick of the light playing on the shields of the riot police. I don’t mean this as a

Some Issues with horizontalism

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

Daniel Marcus

From Occupation to Communization

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

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

As springtime approaches, it will be vital to rethink the tactics of occupations together with the history of capitalism and class struggle. At present, some factions within the movement seem content with an amnesiac view of the camps and assemblies, which they regard as prefiguring a return to postwar progressivism. For example, the OWS Demands Working Group has called for “a massive public works and public service program with direct government employment at prevailing (union) wages, paid for by taxing the rich and corporations, by immediately ending all of America’s wars, and by ending all aid to authoritarian regimes to create 25 million new jobs.” While these are all fine things, they have as their premise the wrong assumption that some version of the welfare state represents a timeless form of the political and economic good. But the welfare state was only ever temporary, designed to serve a partisan set of interests—those of capitalists—and could not have been built save during a bygone period of capitalism’s global development, when the costs of welfare and high employment were capable of being offset by the profitability of modernizing production. Yes, the labor movement did force capitalists to internalize many of the costs of workers’ social reproduction, but it did this in an era of spectacular growth. Nothing could be further from the present scenario of capital and the state. The greatest expansion of the welfare state took place during capitalism’s golden age in the 1950s-60s: the point was not to build a good, equal, or just society, but rather to draw workers further into the system of production, extending that system to encompass nearly every aspect of lived experience. If the 20th century was the proletariat’s utopia, it was also its hell. As a point of fact, the amount of social and economic leverage we bring back into the daily life of everyday people is barely enough to breathe. Now there is only hell, bleak and disastrous. Capitalism has been failing since the late 1960s, when its previous temporary fix—the rapid modernization of production in advanced economies, coupled with reasonably generous social welfare—stopped doing the trick. If the welfare state beckons on the horizons of Zuccotti Park, it can only be a mirage, a trick of the light playing on the shields of the riot police. I don’t mean this as a trick. If the welfare state beckons on the horizons of Zuccotti Park, it can only be a mirage, a trick of the light playing on the shields of the riot police. I don’t mean this as a
materials, to use violence against the existing state: fractions of capital can achieve some of these things in certain circumstances. That which is communist is not “violence” in itself, nor “distribution” of the shit that we inherit from class society, nor “collectivization” of surplus-value sucking machines: it is the nature of the movement which connects these actions and underlies them, renders them the moments of a process which can only commune as a society.

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

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

To critics of the movement of communes, we should reply that the only limits to communication are those imposed by forms of thought inherited from capitalism. We are communists whenever we prioritize cooperation over competition, social over individual life. Likewise, we are reactionaries whenever we retreat to the comfortable enclosures of property and domination. The society of accumulation will not be abolished by “taking” and “holding” spaces or resources, it will be abolished when spaces and resources are used in a manner that permits us to live without capitalism. One need have no particular scruples about how this should be done; for example, it is immaterial how one gathers the materials needed to keep the commune going—whether one pays for them, builds them, abandons homes without questioning the sanctity of our own property, whether owned or rented. We will fail if our wages are not made into the common resource of the commune; we will fail if debtors are permitted to suffer privately. There can be no movement of communes if protest is merely a function of struggle, and yet no movement of communes if protest is simply a reassertion of the same social relations, and those more actively to one person over another. I see this differentiating as relative to the question of leadership. If one person’s voice is heard more, are they not a leader in some way? And if they are, how can we discuss this in a way that is open? I believe we can still create horizontal spaces, and yet recognize that some people are heard differently on different subjects.

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

**Leadership and Power**

Another challenge to horizontalism is the question of leadership. In Argentina, as with our Occupy movements, the initial response to the question of leadership was to declare that there were no leaders. But it is useful to think of a little more clearly here. When people respond that there are no leaders, they actually mean that we are trying to create a space without hierarchy—where people do not have power over each other. If we think about our assemblies and spaces of organization, there are often times when one voice is heard differently from another. This is especially true when we are discussing areas where some people might have more experience than others, such as media, legal, structure, medical, etc. It is also true with some movement participants who have many more years of organizing experience, as well as those who have shown themselves to be especially clear both when speaking and when acting. How else do we listen to one another differently? Depending on the circumstances I think there are many ways we listen, and sometimes more actively to one person over another. I see this differentiating as relative to the question of leadership. If one person’s voice is heard more, are they not a leader in some way? And if they are, how can we discuss this in a way that is open? I believe we can still create horizontal spaces, and yet recognize that some people are heard differently on different subjects.

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

**Structure of Horizontal Decision Making Spaces**

Horizontal spaces do not simply occur spontaneously. To create a space where all people can speak and be heard requires organization and structure. How much structure and organization depends on the group, how long they have known one another, their relationships, etc. Having structures, such as agreements for behavior to one another, can go a long way in helping to remind people how to act, or not act, towards one another. Additionally, having facilitators who are trained and committed to support not only the agreements on
behavior, but the collective agenda as well. For example, if there is disruption during the assembly, the facilitators need to use the power of the group. This can mean identifying the issue, and if it is an individual causing the disruption, asking the group if they think the person should be able to keep speaking out of turn, perhaps using a straw poll to do so, and if they do not think the person should continue, then using the group consensus to tell the person they cannot disrupt and must stop speaking. Sometimes this can even mean asking the group if they agree that if the person keeps talking out of turn they should leave. I have seen this happen successfully in Argentina. And sometimes the regular disrupters are silenced, and sometimes they are made to leave. Also, in Argentina, there were times when assemblies would take a break when someone tried to dominate, with the participants literally turning their backs on the disrupter until they stopped speaking. When disruption is so loud and aggressive that the assembly cannot continue it is a block to the democratic process the group. This can mean identifying the issue, and if it is an individual causing the disruption, asking the group if they think the person should be able to keep speaking out of turn, perhaps using a straw poll to do so, and if they do not think the person should continue, then using the group consensus to tell the person they cannot disrupt and must stop speaking. Sometimes this can even mean asking the group if they agree that if the person keeps talking out of turn they should leave. I have seen this happen successfully in Argentina. And sometimes the regular disrupters are silenced, and sometimes they are made to leave. Also, in Argentina, there were times when assemblies would take a break when someone tried to dominate, with the participants literally turning their backs on the disrupter until they stopped speaking. When disruption is so loud and aggressive that the assembly cannot continue it is a block to the democratic process the group.

Nicholas Mirzoeff

**OCCUPY CLIMATE CHANGE**

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

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

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

Silvia Federici

**Women, Austerity, and the Unfinished Feminist Revolution**

If there was ever a doubt about the long-term nature of the austerity programs that have been imposed on us in recent years, those doubts should be put to rest. It is clear austerity measures are not just a reaction to this or that “crisis” but part of an ongoing attempt to shift power relations. Thanks to our “sacrifices” all now is well in capital’s land. Profits and productivity are at record highs. Banks once festering with toxic assets are stuffed with money. Nevertheless, short of a mass mobilization like the one the Occupy Movement is organizing, 2012 promises to be a gloomy year for most of the country, as we are faced with more cuts in the social spending essential to our survival.

Despite the enormous hardship that people are experiencing in their lives, state after state is preparing to destroy what remains of their investment in social reproduction. Top on the list are all those programs that for many people make a difference between life and death. Senior centers and home care assistance to the elderly who are not self-sufficient, but struggling to remain independent and not be confined to nursing homes;
That austerity is part of the neo-liberal project to restore power to the elites is generally acknowledged. What is less recognized is that it is an attempt to force workers to take on all the costs of their reproduction and as such it places a particular burden on women. The projected budget cuts are designed to eliminate all pockets of social spending that do not appear immediately productive. Not surprisingly, those most targeted are low-income children and elderly, obviously seen as expendable, worthy at best of jails and nursing homes. The ideological justification is the same that has served to defend the cuts in public education. Behind the platitudes about a balanced budget, the assumption taking hold is that our reproduction is a private rather than a public good, something we alone benefit from, for which government therefore bears no responsibility. That the entire business world profits from the activities that reproduce us, enabling us to reappear everyday in millions of workplaces, is a truth the political class has exorcized from public discourse. One of the crucial tasks facing a mass movement like Occupy Wall Street is mobilizing a feminist “consciousness raising” campaign, putting the spotlight on this issue and demystifying the attempt to privatize our everyday reproductive activities or portray them as micro-enterprises.

There is another secret implicit in the new austerity deal which makes a feminist perspective of the essence. It is clearly expected that in the aftermath of the new cuts women will make up for the loss. This is not simply a matter of historical tendencies, nor is it because the services cut are those that more easily will fall back on the shoulders of women. Although women today are the bulk of the workforce – often working two or three jobs – all social statistics indicate that they are the ones who do most of the unpaid domestic labor in the home, and carry the main responsibility for their families’ reproduction. Indeed, many are already living at a breaking point, in a state of constant stress and anxiety that no amount of anti-depressants can alleviate.

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

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

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

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

We spent trillions on the “war on terror” based on what former Vice-President Dick Cheney actually called the “one per cent” doctrine. What he meant was that if there was a one per cent chance of a terrorist action, the US had to act. Ninety-eight per cent of all climate scientists agree that climate change is real and getting worse. Meanwhile all Republican candidates for President deny that climate change even exists, and the current President never utters the phrase for fear of angering Fox News.
For subsidized childcare centers are hard to come by, and with 15 million unemployed, families all over the country are pulling their children out of those they must pay for, which leads to a sharp decline in attendance.

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

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

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

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

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

The standard reaction to such events in developed nations is a ‘more in sorrow than anger’ shake of the head: and then we carry on, there’s nothing to see here. What Pacific small islands, developing nations, indigenous peoples and the global majority living on less than $2 a day have long known is that from the point of view of finance capital we are all, to cite Thoreau at Zuccotti Park.

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

Now, after the evictions, we need to turn around and see that the space we are contesting is an island and the waters are rising. The refusal of the global one percent to recognize the existence and relevance of climate claims is not a denial or a delusion but a political strategy and a choice. As so many have come to realize, our last best hope is the global occupy movement. It’s the G 7 Billion and not the G 20 who can make the changes necessary to sustain the biosphere. No election, no cleverly worded document, no demand, no image will forestall our decision to press on regardless. It’s up to us now: then again, it was always.
he did wrong because he threw his life away, and that no man had a right to undertake anything which he knew would cost him his life. I inquired if Christ did not foresee that he would be crucified if he preached such doctrines as he did, but they both, though as if it was their only escape, asserted that they did not believe that he did. Upon which a third party threw in, “You do not think that he had so much foresight as Brown.” Of course, they as good as said that, if Christ had foreseen that he would be crucified, he would have “backed out.”

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

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

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

Thoreau would have been cheered by the people living in Zuccotti Park—would have written a page of bitter irony on the people said to be living elsewhere, and the other occupations they see fit to prefer. He wouldn’t have written much about it in his Journal, the way he didn’t write much about the few signs of hope in the antebellum 1850s, though he joined them (the Underground Railroad, for example). Then again, it’s now been three months,
It’s a strangely Transcendentalist movement, encouraging by example without demanding imitation or anything else—they’re not asking you to go camp out in the park any more than Thoreau wanted everyone to live in a cabin. As for me, all I know is that now there is one thing I can bear to see and hear about on the news every day: domestic news bringing something new, an imaginable future that’s not like the present.

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

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

**Grow.** We will continue to build relationships with communities who have been fighting and building for decades already, from tenants organizing eviction defense in Bed-Stuy, to AIDS activists in the Staten Island. We will grow by taking on struggles that protect people from the daily assaults they experience—from austerity to police brutality—and by waging struggles to meet peoples’ needs, like reclaiming foreclosed homes. We will transcend the open calls to action and the expectation that they are enough to build a movement; we will organize the hard way, because the hard way is the only way. We will have the million one-on-one conversations it takes to build a movement, door to door if we have to, and we will do it out in the open, because we have nothing to fear and nothing to hide.

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

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

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

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

**OCCUPY & SPACE**

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

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

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

Since that morning Duarte Square has become a flashpoint of sorts, the quixotic focus of one of OWS's most disciplined organizing campaigns. On the night of November 20th I joined a candlelight procession following a small fleet of illuminated tents stenciled with the movement's new slogan: “You cannot evict an idea whose time has come.” Those tents, carried high on sticks, playfully reminded everyone we passed that Occupy was not over. Waiters smoking near staff entrances cheered us on as we paraded by, drivers honked their support, and an angry woman outside a bar made the “loser” signal at us, her eyes locking briefly with
secure thanks to support from sympathetic faculty and administrators. In the weeks that have followed Trinity Church has not budged, while a core group of organizers show no signs of relenting in their efforts to take the space, promising another attempt to “liberate” Duarte Square on December 17th, soon after this gazette goes to press. They imagine a new kind of occupation, better organized, more cohesive, and in some ways more exclusive, than the one at Liberty Plaza, and there is much to admire about their vision. In pursuit of it they have circulated petitions, solicited op-eds, and rallied faith leaders to their cause, consistently highlighting the contradictions between Trinity Church's scriptural duties and its status as New York City’s third largest landholder. “In terms of them being a real estate company, their stance makes sense,” the Reverend at Church of the Ascension in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, told the press. “In terms of them being a church, it makes no sense. The question is, where are their obligations?” Raising the stakes, a group of three young men, former occupiers, declared a hunger strike demanding access to the vacant lot, which they sat down next to. The church quickly had them arrested for trespassing and, when they returned, arrested them again, underscoring the congregation’s inflexibility on the issue. Meanwhile, many movement sympathizers looked on in confusion. Given the various elements and issues at play—the eviction from Liberty Plaza, the lack of open space in which to peacefully protest in our city, the inequities of property ownership, the church’s ostensible sympathy towards OWS, the presence of hunker strikers, and the entreaties to religious figures who were also ruthless real estate moguls—the thread was getting hard to follow. Still I signed the group’s latest petition, not wanting to lose faith.

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

Without a doubt, the most successful attempt to expand the concept of occupation took place on December 6th during a national day of action called “Occupy Our Homes,” an attempt to refocus attention and outrage on the havoc wreaked by the mortgage crisis—a crisis experts say is only half over (around 6 million homes have been seized since 2007, and over the next four years an estimated 8 million more are predicted go into foreclosure). In Chicago, a homeless woman and her baby moved into a foreclosed home with the blessing of the previous owner and the help of more than forty supporters; in Atlanta, protesters made an appearance at foreclosure auctions in three counties; in Denver, activists collected garbage from abandoned properties and delivered it to the mayor; in Oakland, a mother of three reclaimed the townhouse she lost after becoming unemployed while another group held a barbeque at a property owned by Fannie Mae. “To occupy a house owned by Bank of America is to occupy Wall Street,” one activist told me, explaining the underlying logic. “We are literally occupying Wall Street in our own communities.” In New York, Occupy worked with a variety of community organizations and allies to host a foreclosure tour and coordinate the re-occupation and renovation of a vacant bank-owned property. When we reached our final destination, a small house at 702 Vermont Street in Brooklyn, the new residents, a previously homeless family of four, were already inside, along with a veritable array of activists coordinating the event and scheduling rotating teams to guard against eviction. Tasha Glasgow, the mother, was almost too shy to speak, but managed to express her sincere thanks to everyone assembled. Alfredo Carrasquillo, the father of her two children, including a 9-year old daughter who is severely autistic, held back emotion as he addressed the crowd, making sure to acknowledge the NYPD who dotted the sidewalks and could be seen on the roofs of nearby buildings. “I’m just hoping they don’t wake me up in my bed at 2 am,” he joked. As of this writing, almost a week later, the NYPD has not made any arrests at the house, though they have repeatedly intimidated the people staying there. The neighbors, in contrast, have welcomed the occupiers with open arms, inviting them over for tea and to baby showers held on the block. One woman, who lives a few doors down, said they could use her kitchen a few nights a week since the utilities in the occupied house aren’t hooked up.

Not only does the occupation of abandoned foreclosed homes connect the dots between Wall Street and Main Street, it can also lead to swift and tangible victories, something movements desperately need for momentum to be maintained. The banks, it seems, are softer targets than one might expect because so many cases are rife with legal irregularities and outright criminality. It’s not uncommon for customers to be misled, crucial paperwork lost and documents robo-signed. While the mortgage crisis involved credit default swaps and securities and other complex
Space matters for Occupy. But when we seize it—whether it’s the sidewalk, the street, a park, a plaza, a port, a house, or a workplace—we must also claim the moral high ground so that others can be enticed to come and join us there. Occupy Our Homes made clear the connections between the domestic sphere and the financial sector: The occupation of abandoned bank-owned properties is actually a reclamation, a taking back of that which has been taken away, a recouping of something already paid for through other means (by unfairly ballooning monthly payments and the still-indeterminable government bail out, for example). The focus on Duarte Square, I fear, fails to draw the same kind of obvious unserving link to the urgent issues that Occupy Wall Street emerged to address. At a direct action meeting a few weeks ago a young man spoke up. “We just need to occupy something,” he said impatiently. “Anything!” But if Occupy Wall Street takes the wrong space—or fails to clearly articulate the reasons why it is taking the right one—it may end up as lost as if it had none at all.

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

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