

The Future of the Occupy Movement

by Guest Columnist Jules Lobel,
University of Pittsburgh
School of Law

The Occupy Movement, which has already been hugely successful in thrusting issues of inequality and corporate power into the public discourse, faces a critical juncture. As many of the larger encampments in New York, Oakland, Philadelphia and Los Angeles are shut down by the police, activists have been searching for the tactics to move beyond Occupation to Phase 2 of the movement. Some say that the movement now should evolve into the political arena, supporting policy ideas, running candidates for office, and putting pressure on politicians and corporations. Similarly, others argue that the next step is to develop a specific list of demands, which presumably could further policy initiatives and protests.

A different tactical response is to create what essentially would be a non-violent guerrilla movement in American cities. The Chicago occupiers have resolved to have an event a day throughout the winter, such as defending foreclosed homes, sit-ins, banner drops, building parks, providing supplies to the homeless, or guerrilla theater and art.

This article suggests another alternative, one that focuses on creating sustainable alternative decentralized institutions that reflect in microcosm the egalitarian, democratic vision of society that the Occupy Movement has put forth. Such a strategy would be combined with a continual presence in the streets and parks around issues of injustice such as foreclosures.

While determining the tactics of the next phase is critical to keeping the movement alive over the next weeks and months, the broader strategic goal is that of developing a truly long-term movement to

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photo by Damon D'Amato

Fighting Foreclosures: Compassion in Action

by Matt Ward

Wednesday, January 4th was a long day for Rich, a ruddy-faced and Bronx-accented member of Occupy Los Angeles. There was an event planned that afternoon at the home of Faith Parker, a 78-year-old retired schoolteacher and grandmother facing foreclosure. The problem: Ms. Parker lived 11 miles away in South Central. Rich, 20 years homeless, rose early and began walking. "Sure, I could've bummed bus fare. But then you don't get to see anything along the way," he later told me.

Rich's actions got me thinking about compassion. The word's definition, like many in the English language, fails to live up to its legacy. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "compassionate" as "pitable" or "piteous," but this notion of compassion as the "feeling sorry for" is wrong. The word derives from the Latin *patiri* and the Greek *pathein*, meaning "to suffer, undergo, or experience." Adding the prefix *com-* (with) makes compassion more literally definable as "to endure along with another person," to enter that person's point of view, or to feel another's pain as if it were one's own.

The 20th was a rough century for compassion. America's rise as the world's sole superpower, coupled with the indoctrination of an egocentric "American Dream" as the self-proclaimed and untested best pursuit, encouraged us to embrace self-interest as the principal basis of action. The payoff on this investment in self-centeredness has become evident over the past few years: this mirage has benefited only a privileged few. Following decades of suppression and degradation of collective or egoless thinking,

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Occu-perspective:

Novel Movement, Historic Principles

by Alex Candelaria

2012. According to some, this is the year the Mayans predicted an apocalypse...an "end of days," perhaps. To others, this is the year that brings about a "new age." Personally, I feel it's the latter and that it has already started.

In December 2010, a young unemployed college graduate in Tunisia, Mohamed Bouazizi, set fire to himself in protest after the police confiscated the produce he was selling from his stall. With his passing came the passing of winter and the outrage that later ensued led to the subsequent blooming of the Arab Spring of 2011. He became the flashpoint that led to an incredible year of pro-democracy uprisings sprouting across the Middle East, like the wildflowers in our local deserts. Mr. Bouazizi sent another wave of change rippling across the globe very much like the self-immolation of Thich Quang Duc, the Vietnamese Buddhist monk, who nearly five decades earlier burned himself to death to protest the repressive government in early 1960s Vietnam.

I watched in awe the non-violent struggle of so many in the Middle East as they resisted the often violent and deadly response from their oppressors. Yet, despite continued threats and displays of violence against them, they held their post. Neither batons, water cannons, gas nor bullets stood a chance against the sacrifices so many people, unified, were prepared to make. Their solidarity proved that an idea can overcome the harshness of their reality.

These winds of change arrived on our shores when nearly 1,000 people descended upon the financial district of New York City one fateful day in September 2011 to start what has now become the Occupy Movement, and with it, the rebirth of an idea. I see this as a mechanism to reinstate the values and

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Novel Movement, Historic Principles

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principles that our great nation was built upon when originally declared nearly 240 years ago, woven once again into the fabric of the Declaration of the New York City General Assembly at Occupy Wall Street.

Autumn 2011 brought my family and me to the frontlines of the Occupy Movement here in Los Angeles when my children asked what was going on at City Hall while riding our bicycles on First Street during CicLAvia. What was all the noise? Why were people camping... in the middle of the city? This was my opportunity to share with my children that what was happening was an example of what this great nation we are fortunate to live in has to offer: our various freedoms, particularly that of expression.

I became more interested in the happenings of the Movement and was in attendance the days leading up to the eviction from City Hall. I learned, firsthand, that there was more to the Movement than what the mainstream media was depicting as a circus of foul smelling, pot smoking, drum beating drop-outs and slackers. I found the encampment full of men and women of all walks: students, homemakers, boomers, generations X, Y and Z—all sharing the same idea: some unemployed, some employed. During my observation of the eviction from City Hall, I found myself interested in looking for ways to participate and I've since become involved with the Occupy Media Committee and their Occupied Los Angeles Times assisting with Spanish translations and other assorted tasks.

I hope that my children come to understand that what I am trying to accomplish now, as a part of the Occupy Movement, is to make a difference in the quality of all lives, not just ours; to show them the importance of community and supporting one another in the struggles we share; to be persons of high moral character and integrity; to speak up and



photo by Nick Bates

act out, non-violently, when they observe injustices and corruption, just as our Declaration of Independence states:

... that whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness...

"Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" should be pursued and enjoyed by all and not just the powerful and the privileged. We need to remind our elected officials that they are "public servants," elected by us, to represent us—and most importantly—to be held accountable. We are to remind them that we are listening to them as much as we want them to listen to us.

New Years often brings new resolutions. Sure, I wouldn't mind shedding a few unwanted pounds and maybe changing some bad habits. But, today, as I bask in the

warm sun of another Los Angeles winter day, I remember trying to make sense of the meaning of "Solidarnosc" (Polish independent self-governing trade union) in the 1980s, and how I had the opportunity at the time to travel abroad to Moscow, where I was able to stand at the base of the Russian Parliament building one year before the Iron Curtain began unraveling the following Summer of 1991.

Today, I looked to the east at the sun rising over another beautiful day, towards Los Angeles City Hall, towards New York City, Cairo, Tunis and to Moscow, where the cold winds from the Siberian steppes have been singing a new song in recent weeks; two words, "Мы существуем!" "We Exist!"

My resolution?
To be a part
of this Movement:
I Exist!
What's your
resolution?

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TIME LINE

Sept. 17, 2011 – Occupy Wall Street is born, as thousands march through the streets of Manhattan and peacefully settle in Zucotti Park, two blocks north of Wall Street.



Oct. 1 – Over 3000 protesters come out to begin the Occupation of Los Angeles at City Hall.

Rally to Reclaim Our Capital City

D.C. Diary by "Freedom"

After a few hours at Freedom Plaza, we attended a National GA at the foot of the Washington Monument. It felt like real revolution was in the works being there on that dark, windy hill at night, wind flapping the American flags into a frenzy, while silhouettes of occupiers, who made plans for the next day, were visible to passersby. It felt like history in the making.

The next morning was January 17, the big day: Occupy Congress. We showed up to a rainy, wet hill with a few hundred people gathered who sounded off mic check after mic check about why they were there. I headed up the pavement to see more of the crowd and was instantly met with barricades in my ribs. Wordless police were stomping toward me pushing them into me. There was tension in the air, a real power struggle between the cops and the occupiers. A group in orange jumpsuits, protesting the recently signed NDAA, stated their case. Great signs and many people chanting their way to a better world ensued. I interviewed people from around the world, many of whom said they'd been waiting their whole lives for a movement that unites and activates those of us who have suffered for so long. (People can look up the interviews on my ustream channel ustream.tv.occupyfreedomla)

Thereafter, a national GA was held, where about 1,000 people participated. We broke into groups focused on different topics. I chose the Visioning Group and walked away from that heartened with hope for the movement. People spoke of ways to build community, make our lives and the movement sustainable, of educating each other, building schools and more.

We then swarmed congress -- literally. Protestors pushed through barricades on the steps of the Rayburn Building and swarmed the upper level, hanging banners and signs while cheering and chanting. The moment felt victorious, like the people were claiming what was inherently theirs. Soon after, I headed to Congressman Henry Waxman's office to have a chat about the NDAA. Surprisingly, he welcomed me into his office, asking how the protest was going. He said he could hear it through the windows. His welcoming demeanor instantly faded when he asked if I was filming, which I was. He tried to usher me to the door but I insisted on asking him about his vote on the NDAA. He was defensive and said he didn't like that indefinite detention thing either, but the rest of it was



photo by Vi Bella

important, so he voted for it. We disagreed on the sanctions on Iran provision as well. He expressed concern over Iran possessing nuclear weapons, and I expressed my concern over those sanctions backfiring and actually pushing us closer to a war. He then essentially pushed me out of his office as I tried to continue that conversation, but not before I made it clear to him that he lost my vote. He couldn't have cared less.

The protestors then formed a spontaneous march in the streets that lasted about an hour, which involved cops clearing a path for them. People were amped! At nightfall, about 3,000 people marched off of the Capitol lawn into the street and stopped traffic, while intrigued drivers flashed peace fingers. When the group spotted the Supreme Court, Occupiers flooded the Supreme Court steps, chanting "Whose courts? Our courts!" It was a sight to behold. Using one of our most powerful tools, our voices, we were laying claim to what was rightfully ours, and standing up to those corporations and bought-off politicians who attempt to occupy OUR space.

On Pennsylvania Avenue, the march sprawled across the wide street and onto the sidewalks; Occupiers chanting en route past Freedom Plaza toward the White House (Obama was reportedly out having a steak dinner with Michelle for her birthday). Regardless, we tied

paper hearts containing our wishes onto the White House fence, and heard mic checks from a group of veterans and many other passionate occupiers it was hopeful and inspiring. Amid rumors of tear gas and loads of cops heading our way, I turned to find an "om circle." About 50 people were sitting outside the White House gate, grounding the space in a sound bath of love.

"It's a nice break from all the yelling," one occupier commented. I had hundreds of people from around the world watching on my stream at that point, commenting about how beautiful it was. It was one of the most powerful moments of the trip.

The next morning, January 20, it was time to Occupy the Courts.

We showed up to the same steps we swarmed just a few nights before, and clearly, they were expecting us. The Supreme Court Police, about 30 at first, lined up behind fancy barricades. Many had no nametags or badge numbers showing. I asked repeatedly for names, and for the commanding officer, and was continually ignored and disrespected by this motley crew. I became frustrated and disheartened by the level of disrespect these officers showed me. At one point I screamed, "I want my country back!" I went to the MoveToAmend.org rally across the street on the Capitol lawn and heard words of wisdom and encouragement from a host of people, including Code Pink founder Medea Benjamin, Coffee Party founder Annabel Park and Move to Amend's David Cobb.

After the speeches, we returned to The Supreme Court. And after chanting and protesting, occupiers pushed down the barricades and flooded the steps. The police actually allowed it at first. An officer announced through his bullhorn, from about 100 yards away, that people were now at risk of arrest. I pointed my camera at him and told him the chanting mob of occupiers up there couldn't hear him. The arrests started soon afterwards. One man, Robert Cruz from Occupy Redding, had his skull fractured and a rotator cuff torn due to a violent arrest on the steps. Some were alleging that the plain-clothes police in the crowd were instigating the scuffle, and

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ARTIST'S CORNER

OLIVER STONE SEES ROCKY ROAD, SUCCESS DOWN THE LINE

*Celebrated artists on the political
tip kick it with OLAT Editor
P.K. Ziainia, and spit their
take on all things Occupy.*

In this edition, P.K. sits down with a personal hero: socio-political and historically minded renegade filmmaker Oliver Stone. Vietnam veteran, activist and filmmaker Oliver Stone has been often celebrated and derided, but has never failed to hit a nerve with the public.

P.K.: Did you go to any of the Occupy encampments in person?

Oliver: I wandered through Wall Street; talked to people. The media seemed to marginalize it. Obama hasn't paid any attention. You won't get any cooperation from the entrenched establishment, but the power of your movement exists in its anonymity and tenacity, because we all know something is wrong. Presently in our society, there's no justice and you all are an echo of that. And it's a good time, because our empire is weak spiritually.

P.K.: You're a student of history; can you compare or connect the Occupy movement with the Arab Spring?

Oliver: The Arab Spring was more focused. They were demonstrating against patent dictatorship while ours is one that's beginning. In other words, you don't even know it's there. You are being watched and being considered, but continue. There's a crack in the dam. When the Soviet Union fell, we lost our best friend, because we were left in a vacuum. Hubris set in and we became corrupt faster and faster, which is what your movement is saying. We can't afford it. We can't afford this empire. Now many want to start a war with Iran—it's crazy. We are corrupt economically, morally, socially. This is what your movement is saying: We can't afford this empire, a war with Iran. This kind of war will further destroy our country.

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Oct. 12 - In a historic vote that set a precedent for other cities across the nation, the L.A. City Council unanimously passes a resolution in support of Occupy Los Angeles.

Nov. 5 - Across the nation, thousands march on banks and financial institutions to mark National Bank Transfer Day. Due to the month-long campaign leading up to the national day of action, an estimated 600,000 people pulled their cash out of major banks.

Nov. 17 - Occupations nationwide march and hold rallies in solidarity with Occupy Wall Street's two-month anniversary. In Los Angeles, over 500 Occupiers demonstrate in downtown L.A.'s financial district chanting "Banks got bailed out, we got sold out."

Foreclosures: Compassion in Action...

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there is a gaping hole in American life where community once thrived.

This is one of many voids within mankind's collective psyche that Occupy has begun to fill. Nationwide, the Occupy movement's defense of foreclosed homes and individuals is an embodiment of the compassion espoused by the history's greatest prophets and philosophers. Since December 6, 2011, Occupy Los Angeles and Occupy the Hood have marched in the footsteps of these titans by occupying homes alongside the evicted and foreclosed, disrupting and/or dispersing foreclosure auctions, protesting predatory banks, lobbying city government for redress, and unifying the community around defeating one of the most difficult, stigmatized, and unjust crises presently facing the 99%.

Despite several victories, the banks, responsible for the mortgage crisis in the first place, continue to wage economic war on America. Bertha Herrera, 70, of Van Nuys, is swept up in the tumult. Ms. Herrera has spent the last ten years volunteering as a chaplain at three hospitals. Her last paid employment was coordinating a program for children with physical and mental disabilities, and before that, offering aid to impoverished women and single-mother families at a community resource center. Despite having every right to do so, she does not levy blame upon the banks for causing the mortgage crisis. She blames them for tricking her into losing her home of 30 years.

After an accident left her on disability, Ms. Herrera refinanced her home and had to take on a roommate to keep up her payments. She discovered in 2009 that her set interest rate was to become variable in 2010, which she would be unable to afford. Following a loan modification request, Ms. Herrera was first coerced into unwittingly signing the last page of a loan modification contract, the rest of which was not mailed to her for more than a month. Her loan holder then informed Ms. Herrera that she was not required to make her next three months' payments. When she requested documentation verifying

this, she was stalled (later, when she appealed and explained being misled by the representative, the claim was denied due to lack of documentation). After skipping the first payment, Ms. Herrera became concerned and followed up. VeriQuest said they'd get back to her.

Shortly thereafter Ms. Herrera received a past-due notice from her lender. She paid it the next day, upset and uneasy about being misled. When she later made her August payment, she discovered that the money was not being applied to her principal, but instead to "insurance and taxes." Her lender had begun paying her homeowner's insurance, even though



photo by Damon D'Amato

she was already paying it herself, and was attempting to charge her a second time, alongside other fees. She received a notice in early November that she had an outstanding balance of approximately \$2,000. Five days later, she received another notice that her balance had risen to \$5,000. By Nov. 15, VeriQuest threatened foreclosure without immediate and full repayment for a past-due balance of over \$6,000.

For 27 years, Bertha Herrera had faithfully paid her mortgage. As she scrambled to mobilize emergency payment, her lender had already moved to foreclose. It is alleged that documents of service were presented to a "tall and slender woman" on November 18 to a woman named Bertha Herrera. Ms. Herrera is 5'4", neither slim nor stocky, and never

received the documents. Without notice of service, her five-day window to challenge the foreclosure in court slammed shut while the bank had her scrambling to mobilize the funds to pay the full sum (payment they then refused).

Ms. Herrera has continued to fight for her home despite being evicted on Jan. 5 alongside about 15 brave home Occupiers. Until recently, the re-sale of her house had proceeded so quickly that she was approached by a woman interested in "taking a look around the place" while Ms. Herrera was still packing her belongings. Although clearly pained by this and other humiliating moments throughout the process, she remains strong, hopeful, and thankful.

One of many reasons the Occupation of Solidarity Park was life-changing was the way compassion was lived there, daily, together. From the peacekeepers offering their bodies to calm unrest and the wellness committee offering healthcare, to the various "neighborhoods" looking out for each other, and even in the way people would hear out those who just needed some time to speak, compassion breathed and thrived. Now we must expand this success from the encampment to the psyche.

The action at Ms. Faith Parker's South Central residence went well that day. Recently the bank has returned to the negotiating table; her home may yet be saved. She, beautiful and courageous, possessing a story every bit as compelling as Bertha's, is not going to go

Her strength and resilience has paid off. The bank has recently begun returning Ms. Herrera's calls, and there is hope that her home may yet be saved. Speaking of the service provided by the Occupiers, and about compassion in general, her voice lit up: "How I describe it, [Occupiers] have carried my burden for me, with me. I can't imagine, simply can't imagine going through that alone. The way the sheriffs pounded, slammed on the door until they broke the latch..."

This is what true compassion looks like. Compassion isn't feeling bad for someone or offering condolences. Compassion is living a moment of vulnerability and pain alongside a fellow human being while selflessly devoting oneself to their well-being. Above all, compassion is about not having to go through it alone.

easily. Occupy will be at her side for every step of the way.

That evening, I gave Rich a ride back to the General Assembly. It was then that I learned he had walked all the way from downtown. After I voiced my disbelief, he chuckled, and in his Bronx accent mused, "If you'd told me 20 years ago that I'd spend my whole day walking to South Central to try to save the house of someone I didn't even know, I'd have told you you was nuts." He sounded at peace.

(Foreclosure battles are constantly ongoing. If you would like to get involved, or if you require foreclosure assistance, contact occupyforeclosure@gmail.com or visit the Occupy Los Angeles General Assembly).

Nov. 27 - After Mayor Villaraigosa's announcement of a 12:01 am eviction, more than 1000 people come out to stand in solidarity with Occupy Los Angeles. Despite heavy police presence in the streets until 5 am, Occupiers were peaceful and the encampment remained.



Nov. 30 - Over 1400 police in full riot gear storm Occupy Los Angeles, arrest 292 non-violent protesters (often with excessive force) and tear down the homes of the largest mass assembly Occupation left in the nation.

Dec. 12 - OLA mobilized over 600 people and, along with Occupy Long Beach, temporarily shut down the Port of Los Angeles to protest worker exploitation and Goldman Sachs, a partial owner, as part of "Occupy the Ports," a coordinated West Coast action from San Diego to Alaska.



Activists in Court Need Your Support

by "Tomaisen"

At arraignments between Christmas and New Years, Occupy LA activists demonstrated the power of courtroom solidarity by showing up en masse to occupy the courtrooms at the Clara Shortridge Foltz criminal courts building in downtown Los Angeles.

The benches were packed with peaceful onlookers who were deployed into an effective support team by Leone Hankey and other members of Occupy's legal committee. As the arraignment judge read out the courtroom and judge assignments for each case, Leone persuaded observers to go to specific courtrooms to monitor trials in an attempt to ensure that every defendant had someone with them for support; in her words, "We can't leave anyone alone."

Charges have not yet been filed against more than half of those arrested in the Nov. 30 eviction raid, but City Attorney Carmen Trutanich has until next November to do so. His decisions, affecting the lives of some 150 protesters, will probably be guided by the outcome of early trials. Though there have been almost 20 dismissals for poorly filed LAPD paperwork, there have been more convictions than hung juries in cases that went to trial. In a few cases, enlightened judges have made sensible sentencing decisions: In a probation violation matter (for arrest at the Nov. 30 raid) in late January, Judge William Sterling gave the defendant a choice to suspend his 20-day community service requirement, if he read Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience," and turned in a 300-word essay to the court. However, that is far from typical. Some peaceful protestors have been sentenced to \$1000 fines in addition to time served, plus probation.

Far more serious risks were involved in two protest cases that have been filed as felony charges. Both appear to be trumped-up charges against gentle, articulate, well-respected minority males who played key roles within Occupy Los Angeles. Sergio Ballasteros, a former high school teacher and children's camp aide involved in Free University classes at City Hall, who had appeared on a national MSNBC TV panel discussing the goals of Occupy just a few days earlier, was charged with "lynching" (removing a prisoner from custody in a riot situation) at an Art Walk protest Jan. 12. Witnesses say he was singled out and beaten down in a melee after police seized a drummer for walking into the street.

Steven Releford, 22, an African-American active in the "Keepin' It Real" Committee, was hanging art on a City Hall fence Dec. 17 during an anti-NDAA protest, and was a mere bystander to civil disobedience (six Occupiers in Guantanamo-style orange jump suits went onto the lawn to be arrested) when, in the subsequent commotion, LAPD officers seized the only two black men present; five or six of them ganging up on Releford, knocking him to the ground, and then alleging that he resisted arrest (arrest on what grounds was unstated) and tried to seize an officer's gun. Aside from being totally out of character—Steven was noted as a campground diplomat and peace-maker—the charges of aggression are strongly rebutted by witnesses and video. However, if cooler thinking does not prevail at the DA's office before filing, Releford faces risk of serious time—another reason why Occupiers and sympathizers should not be evading jury summons.

Those not on the roster for jury duty can at least provide courtroom support. In the 1990s, grassroots groups like the L.A. Rebellion Action Network and Mothers Reclaiming Our Children, lacking money for legal assistance, relied heavily on courtroom solidarity as a defense against police repression and racist judicial proceedings. These cases did not always end favorably, but generally it seemed the more observers in the courtroom, the less likely it was that judges and prosecutors would act in an unjust manner. Courtroom solidarity gives hope to defendants, who are less likely to give up on their own cases when they know someone cares.

Marching in King's Footsteps

by Mitch Ward

Occupy LA, Occupy the Dream, Occupy the Hood and the Martin Luther King Coalition joined forces on January 16 for the annual Kingdom Day Parade paying tribute to the slain civil rights leader.

Occupy LA occupiers at The Kingdom Day Parade brought their message of economic inequality and a need for mortgage and banking reforms, among other issues, to a vast new audience. The parade provided high visibility in LA's African-American community for the Occupy movement. A community that knows all too well the harm created from greedy corporations, harmful bankers and politics catering to the needs of the 1%.

To combat this, Occupy the Hood has been placing large banners on bank foreclosed and seized homes in South LA, drawing attention to minority-owned homes often taken by unscrupulous bankers. Many of these properties remain vacant in a community desperately in need of affordable housing.

Many African-American spectators posed for photos and filmed videos with Occupy activists, usually trying to get colorful protest signs in the picture. Ironically, beforehand, Native American Occupiers were almost denied entry into the parade honoring a man of inclusion.

For nearly four hours, OLA and many others waited near the west side of Western Avenue to join the parade on MLK Boulevard. All the parade entrants behind OLA were allowed entry while Occupy LA and the Native American occupiers were left standing and wondering. Something was not right.

Kwazi Nkrumah, of Occupy the Hood LA, confronted one of the orange-suited parade organizers. "Is there a problem?" The organizer indicated Native dancers and drummers were not on her list of permitted entrants for the parade, and would not be allowed to march. Visibly fumed, Kwazi responded, "We cannot leave our Native American brethren. Dr. King wouldn't stand for this." And Occupy won't either.

An LAPD officer approached and said, "What's wrong?" Kwazi said, "We will not march without our Native American brethren. Dr. King would not stand for this." He raised his hands saying "Arrest me now!"

A Native American man in feather headdress and face paint sat down near Kwazi. Occupiers and others surrounded them chanting, "Let them march! Let them march!" Impatient spectators then joined in. Finally, the LAPD relented and they took the open space in the parade, which rightfully belonged to them.

Occupiers marched for two miles to Leimert Park, the heart of LA's historic African-American community, warmly greeted the whole way with cheers, thumbs-ups, and fist pumps in the air.

The Kingdom Day Parade 2012 was successfully occupied. Mission accomplished.



photo by Mitch Ward



January 1, 2012 -- Occupy's New Year's Summit at Pasadena's All Saints Church offered panel discussions on Stop Foreclosures, End Corporate Personhood and Money Out of Politics, plus a dance performance based on the idea of "movement," and music by the Agape Spiritual Center's Children's Choir.

Jan. 2 - Occupy the Rose Parade brings the "Occ-topus", a 250-foot-long Constitution, a 60-foot-long Corporate Constitution, a Human Float and the Occupy message to tens of thousands of families at the Rose Parade.



Jan. 13 - Foreclosure Fridays debuts as an ongoing Occupy L.A. campaign with a protest that disrupts an Auction.com foreclosure auction at the downtown Sheraton Hotel, followed by a march to Bank of New York Mellon.

The Future of the Occupy Movement

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transform society — measured not in seasons, but years or even decades. That task is one of sustainability. How can the Occupy Movement (OWS) develop the organizational, cultural and institutional forms to sustain a long term movement, yet also maintain its dynamism, horizontalism, direct democracy, creativity, activism and transformative vision?

There is no road map or magic formula for success in that project. Indeed, OWS's spirit of creative experimentation and of an openness to new ideas must be at the heart of any effort to move beyond what has been accomplished in the past. But what lessons have we learned to help us in the long term task?

Lessons of OWS

Five main attributes of OWS have contributed to its massive success and provide the basis for its continuation as a radical alternative in the future.

1. Presenting a Narrative, World View or Declaration - Not Specific Demands

Until OWS, the left had not set forth an alternative narrative to that of the right or democratic party liberals. Such a narrative explains to people why we are in our present mess, who and what is responsible for our predicament, and offers a broad solution. The right has such a narrative: the evil is big government and the solution is to cut taxes and government spending. The liberal narrative tends to be that the lack of government oversight and a rigid adherence to free market capitalism is the problem and that more government regulation is the answer. The left has all too often simply presented a mélange of programmatic demands and a defense of government programs. OWS presented a competing narrative that resonated with millions of people: corporate power and greed got us into this mess, the only way out is for the 99% to stand together to demand equality, justice and fairness.

photo by Nick Bates



It is that broad perspective, narrative or worldview — as opposed to a laundry list of demands — that helped change the political debate.

OWS was able to connect equality to liberty in a manner that allowed people to see gross inequality as morally unjust. Since the 1970s, both conservatives and liberals have focused on individual liberty, privacy and autonomy (albeit in different areas, guns versus reproductive freedom), while paying little or no attention to equality. OWS focused the nation's attention on the fact that for most folks (the 99%), individual liberty is incomplete or even a hollow shell without social and economic equality and justice, as international human rights

principles now recognize. Finally, that OWS's basic document was a declaration which seemingly reflected the July 4, 1776, Declaration of Independence. Neither the OWS nor the 1776 Declaration demanded a list of reforms; rather they both highlighted the illegitimacy of the ruling regime.

Some have argued that while the broad critique was appropriate at the outset, now the movement needs more specific programmatic demands. While OWS has and should continue to involve itself in particular struggles around particular issues — for example stopping foreclosures — its uniqueness and vitality is in its ability to present an indictment of current reality and a broad, perspective on what should

be done, reminding people of basic values. As OWS activist Katie Davison pointed out in *The Nation*, "We need a movement of solidarity that is about values first." These values are not foreign to the left, or for that matter to most Americans.

2. Political Independence

OWS, unlike many unions and progressive coalitions, chose not to focus on elections, the legislative process or lobbying. Rather OWS started in the streets (or parks) and ought to remain there as a beacon of hope for the future and a means of putting pressure on corporations and politicians from outside the political system.

As a constitutional and human rights lawyer, I recognize the value of specific reforms that can sometimes be won in the electoral arena, in legislative forums or in courts. But I also have seen that often the most important reforms are achieved by pressure from outside of the system and that entering such established arenas can often hamstring social and political movements. OWS has already had an effect on specific issues such as the Keystone XL pipeline issue, as Naomi Klein recently pointed out. But even more importantly, OWS has stirred for many the desire to move beyond specific reforms, to act on our aspirations for a fundamentally different type of society that is democratic and egalitarian. Only by maintaining its independence from parties and traditional institutions can OWS continue to inspire those hopes and dreams.

3. Non-Violence, Creativity, Experimentation & Inclusiveness

I include these attributes as one because they are all related. The occupation encampments encompassed a diverse group of very creative activists who debated various issues and a range of solutions without fixed preconceptions. Many of us were captivated by the energy, creativity and ability to reach consensus exhibited at the numerous occupations around the country.

Jan. 17 — Occupy Congress -- See article, Page 3

Jan. 16 - Occupy Los Angeles and Occupy the Hood march in the annual King Day parade, celebrating the Martin Luther King legacy of civil disobedience and social change (see Page 5).

Jan. 19 - Occupy Los Angeles and Occupy Riverside protesters gather at the UC Regents Board meeting to denounce the 320% increase in annual tuition in the past several years, commodifying students and higher education. UC police, Sheriffs departments, Highway Patrol, SDPD try to surround the 500 protesters gathered at the student union building.

Jan. 20 — Occupy the Courts - See article, Page 3

There have been well over 100 actions, including teach-ins, rallies, marches and events, since Occupy Los Angeles first took root. We no longer have a physical occupation, but our voices are only growing stronger. This is just the beginning.

FUN FORECLOSURE FACTS

Number of foreclosures in CA since 2008: **1.2 million**

Proportion of all US foreclosures occurring in CA: **1 out of 5**

Number of LA homes "under water" - more owed than market value: **80,000**

Total loss in home value 2008-12 due to 200,000 LA-area foreclosures: **\$78 billion**

Combined cost to owners and to the local government in reduced property tax: **\$650 billion**

SOURCE: "Wall St. Wrecking Ball," ACCE and California Reinvestment Coalition, 2011

4. Visible, Not Transitory Presence

The occupations, unlike a one-shot demonstration, had continual visible staying power. As Naomi Klein and Francis Fox Piven have pointed out, the occupiers put no end date to their presence, and said they were staying put. That made them an ongoing real presence which could not be ignored, neither by the media nor by public opinion. Moreover, OWS has been able to bridge the gap that often separates virtual from actual politics.

The first definition of the term "occupy" in Webster's dictionary is "to engage the attention or energies of," and the occupy movement succeeded by its continual visual presence in engaging the public's attention. Even without the space in those cities in which the encampments have been shut down, the occupy movement must find ways to continue to visually occupy the attention of millions of Americans, the media, and the elite.

5. Creating Alternative Models of How a Democratic Egalitarian Society Might Look

Perhaps the most critical component of OWS is its creation of alternative communities which reflect the egalitarian, democratic world that its activists seek for the future. By creating a community dedicated to solidarity, consensus decision-making, everyone's participation, respect for everyone's opinion, and equality, OWS attempted to demonstrate that another world is possible, not in theory but in practice.

That effort creates hope for a radically different future, which in many respects is more or equally important than winning particular demands. As Matthias Schwartz pointed out in a recent New Yorker article, "In the end, the point of Occupy Wall Street is not its platform so much as its form, people sit down and hash things out instead of passing their complaints on to Washington." As the slogan around the encampment went, "We are our demands."

Future

When I went to the Occupy Pittsburgh encampment I asked several people there what they saw as its future. A young English graduate student's answer lay in the community, in developing a concrete alternative rooted in equality, solidarity and democracy. For her, the OWS was a way of her expressing her vision of the future.

To me, the long term viability of the OWS movement as a transformative movement lies in the creation of these communities, which not only directly practice what they believe, but seek to reach out and affect the public consciousness through direct action.

An important accomplishment of the Occupy Movement is to rekindle the hope that these alternative communities of solidarity can grow.

There are reasons to be hopeful.

OWS can create organizational forms that combine its democratic, egalitarian origins with audacious, ongoing direct action, an overall narrative that continues to express values of solidarity, equality and democracy, and political independence and survive as a model of how a just society would operate. If OWS can do so over the long term, it will have made a major contribution, not simply to transforming the public dialogue, but to birthing a new society.

WE ARE THE 99%

General Assemblies

7:30 pm, every Monday, Wednesday & Friday
4 pm, Saturdays
at Pershing Square

Contact Info

occupiedlosangelestimes@gmail.com

Website

www.occupylosangeles.org

Facebook

www.facebook.com/occupyLA

Twitter

www.twitter.com/occupyLA

Livestream

www.livestream.com/owslosangeles

OCCUPIED L.A. TIMES STAFF

EDITORS

Nick Bates
Shineh Rhee
Michael Seeley
P.K. Ziainia

WRITERS/REPORTERS

Alex Candelaria
"Freedom"
Jules Loebel
Matt Ward
Mitch Ward

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Nick Bates
Vi Bella
Damon D'Amato
Deniz Guevarra
Mitch Ward

LAYOUT/DESIGN

E. Anne Susen / Eulalie Designs
Becca Wilson

TEAM OLAT SUPPORT

Mario Jefferson
Dan Niswander
Rob Tossberg

Thanks & apologies
to Guido Girgenti

photo by Nick Bates



Having accepted the Movement's request to join the Rose Parade, Officials welcomed Occupy with open arms. Beginning at Singer Park with the unfurling of our 250-foot long "We the People" and 60-foot long "We the Corporations" banners, our group of marchers and street performers formed a symbolic Rose Parade human float in the shape of an 'Occupy Octopus.'

ONGOING ACTIONS

FEBRUARY 14 - RALLY AT LAUSD BOARD OF ED - from 2:30 pm -- 333 S. Beaudry, (W. of Harbor Fwy). Come support teachers and protect students from savage budget cuts. Join United Teachers Los Angeles and concerned parents & students to oppose the elimination of Early Childhood Education, elementary arts programs and the district's proposal to terminate the Adult Ed program. Over 400,000 students annually use the adult and career education classes; 3000 teachers would lose their jobs. Visit www.aeutlanet for ongoing info on this struggle.

FEBRUARY 18 - 1 to 4 pm - GENERAL STRIKE OUTREACH, CENTRAL L.A. - Mercado La Paloma near USC, 3655 S. Grand Ave. Occupy organizers for the May 1 General Strike plan an outreach effort in the Adams and Grand area south of downtown Los Angeles, and will talk with public social service and health employees and their clients followed by an educational event. Themes of the general strike include: immigrant rights, economic, social and environmental justice, civil liberties, housing, education and health care as human rights along with women's rights and gender equality.

Stone: 'Things Will Change'

(continued from page 3)

PK: Would you consider yourself an Occupier?

Oliver: I am a messenger that's attracted lightning and a lot of criticism. I'm a filmmaker, and at the end of the day a dramatist, who needs to be entertaining as I try to understand the psychology of fear. I've been marginalized over the years. I set out to be a mover, artistically, politically, however, I could do things—but they marginalized me. I can't understand why we are so militaristic and aggressive. I'm still trying to understand this addiction to war and fear of enemies that we ourselves create; whether it's Russia, terrorists or drugs.

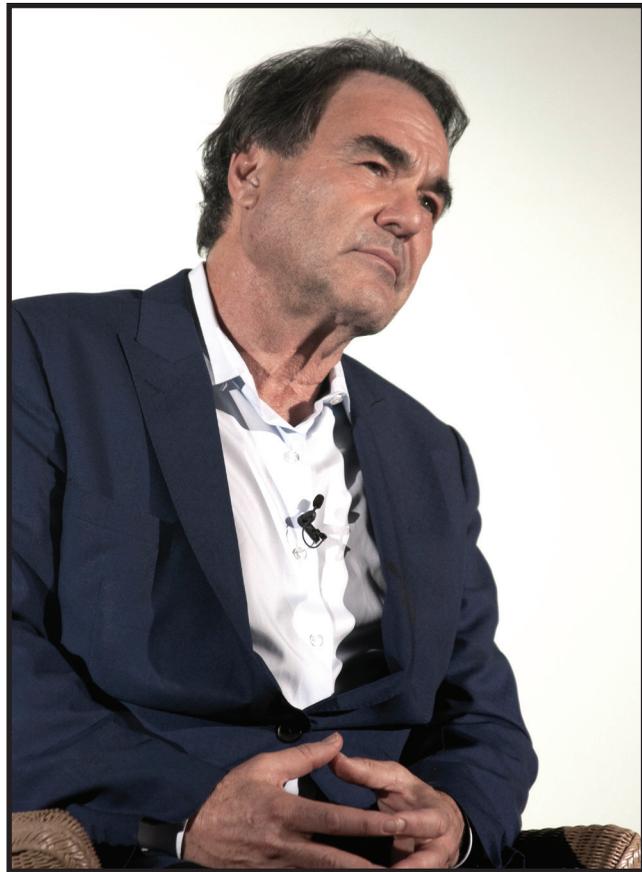


photo by Deniz Gueverra

But you guys cannot focus on these specific issues. Your movement is more of a poetic one. It's more like an image. Be the echo. Be non-violent, but occupy everything. You're fighting an enormous, powerful military and corporate conglomerations. Let the world know. At first they will be uneasy and many will hate you, but the more you get gassed and arrested, the more you'll make a difference.

PK: Looking at Occupy as a dramatist who has articulated the protester/protests of the past, for instance Vietnam and Ron Kovic, do you see a difference now or are we seeing history simply repeat itself?

Oliver: You see the Vietnam protests did work, but as a result the right wing bought up most of the media, and then it all

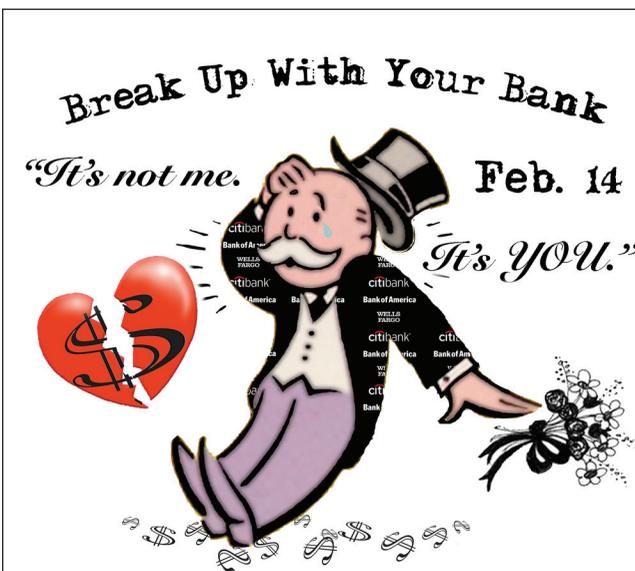
moved to the right. They were furious after Watergate. To go from Watergate to Ronald Reagan in only seven years, things changed fast. I'm a product of Vietnam and I've seen war and I just don't understand the addiction to war, the addiction to an enemy we create: the Soviets, Manuel Noriega, Saddam Hussein and now Iran. We are in love with fear, but remember, things can change fast and that change can be positive.

PK: Why do people become uncomfortable with Occupy, or political truth in general, when in their hearts they know something is wrong?

Oliver: They didn't listen to the Vietnam protesters at first. Yet they came around. Keep doing it. People are uneasy about it, but be the echo and it will resonate.

PK: But what's the current disconnect?

Oliver: We've created a society where people are struggling to survive. Education and health care costs a fortune in this country. The media, the process of government numbs people. They can't afford an opinion that's freethinking. They're subject to surveillance, drug tests, negative news and you're lucky if you have a job, so you don't want to open your mouth. TV is another numbing factor...alcohol, drugs, a thousand things to numb you with. But there's also a conscience, a moral consciousness. Eventually people come around.



art work by Jay Davis

Moving your money out of big, for-profit Wall Street banks to non-profit credit unions is a great idea for a number of reasons: You will get better rates and fewer fees, your community banker will learn your name and provide you with more personal service, and you will be keeping money in your local community, which increases economic development and eventually creates more jobs.

visit www.banktransferday.org

PK: Corporate personhood - what do you think of it?

Oliver: It's ridiculous. The Supreme Court's decision that corporations are human beings sickens me. It's part of the madness of America, because humanity is lost. Corporations do not have your interest at heart. Everyone knows that taking money out of politics is the only solution. But how?

PK: What do you say to the Occupiers?

Oliver: Resist without violence. Show up again and again. Occupy as many places as you can. The more gassed you get, the more beaten you get, the better for your movement, because people will see the mentality of their state.

PK: What's the tipping point?

Oliver: Think the break in the Berlin wall. I don't think I'll die before I see another springtime. Things will change. Stay poetic and be the echo of the greed. Go to places that are tough, places where they will ban and hate you. Stay non-violent and endure.

Occupy Congress & Courts...

(continued from page 3)

some video footage clearly shows one of them taking an occupier in a headlock. One arrest of a senior citizen included some ankle twisting and laying of full body weight by SCPD on other peaceful protestors, some of who were simply meditating when arrested. I saw many faces, too many faces, hit the marble steps on a building that had "Equal Justice Under Law" engraved along the top of it. Oh, the hypocrisy! Some of the officers admittedly and deliberately blocked my camera and one even smacked it out of my hands. I demanded his name and was completely ignored. During this madness, two officers, including a Deputy Chief, touched my breast while pushing me back. It was intentional and with pressure. The action resulted in a dozen arrests now referred to as the "DC Dozen."

From there, I attended the Move to Amend meeting happening in a church across the street. There, on its two-year anniversary, Occupiers and others discussed how to achieve the goal of amending the constitution to overturn Citizen's United. Truly, they were a determined group.

I came out of that week renewed, recharged and inspired. Revolution was and is in the air! A new day is dawning and a new world is emerging. For me, Occupy comes as an obligation of consciousness to call out injustice and to take part in discussions about what a better world can look like. This leads me to call this time and this movement an "Evolution." The world is finally evolving into its greater potential and I feel extraordinarily blessed to be a witness. There's a momentum that comes from this kind of work: from being out in the streets, to sitting and having heartfelt, thoughtful discussions. Occupy is the movement of our time. It's a call to create a better reality for all beings, and I wouldn't miss it for the world. It's go time. GO OCCUPY!

For video coverage of these events, check out these sites: ustream.tv/occupyfreedomla and occupyfreedomla.org

FEBRUARY 22 - 23 OCCUPY COLLEGE TEACH-INS

Coalitions between students & workers are rapidly forming for solidarity actions March 1 to defend education. In preparation for this huge day of worldwide dissent, campuses will be holding teach-ins on Feb. 22 & 23. Occupy Colleges will draft a petition calling for a moratorium on student loan debt and prepare a handbook on how students can occupy their campuses. Interested in becoming a facilitator or linking up to national actions? Join the conference calls via Interoccupy.org, every Sunday at 6:30 PM.

FEBRUARY 29 - WALMART WORKERS' RALLY

A major build-up action towards the May General Strike will be Feb. 29 in Mira Loma in support of the Warehouse Workers United campaign, which is challenging Walmart to adopt a Responsible Contractor Policy. The rally point is Schneider Logistics, a Walmart contractor planning to fire more than 100 workers who sued to recover stolen wages. They sued Schneider and its labor contractor last year and won over not being paid minimum wage or overtime. But they face joblessness March 1, as hiring contractor Rogers-Premier pulls out of its deal with Schneider, more than a year before it expires, putting 100 out of work. Last fall, Schneider managers informed workers that if they supported the lawsuit, they would be "destroyed" and "thrown away," and two were suspended, according to court records.