

## WE STAND WITH THE MAJORITY: Human Needs, Not Corporate Greed



PHOTO BY ELLEN DAVIDSON



PHOTO BY CHIP SOMODEVILLA

### A MOVEMENT TOO BIG TO FAIL

By Chris Hedges

There is no danger that the protesters who have occupied squares, parks and plazas across the nation in defiance of the corporate state will be co-opted by the Democratic Party or groups like MoveOn. The faux liberal reformers, whose abject failure to stand up for the rights of the poor and the working class, have signed on to this movement because they fear becoming irrelevant. Union leaders, who pull down salaries five times that of the rank and file as they bargain away rights and benefits, know the foundations are shaking. So do Democratic politicians from Barack Obama to Nancy Pelosi. So do the array of "liberal" groups and institutions, including the press, that have worked to funnel discontented voters back into the swamp of electoral politics and mocked those who called for profound structural reform.

Resistance, real resistance, to the corporate state was displayed when a couple of thousand protesters, clutching mops and brooms, early Friday morning forced the

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A large majority of the American people consistently support the following agenda:

- Tax the rich and corporations
- End the wars, bring the troops home, cut military spending
- Protect the social safety net, strengthen Social Security and provide improved Medicare for all
- End corporate welfare for oil companies and other big business interests
- Transition to a clean energy economy, reverse environmental degradation
- Protect worker rights including collective bargaining, create jobs and raise wages
- Get money out of politics

The government, dominated by elite economic interests, is going in the opposite direction from what the people want. We feel that the people could rule their own destiny better, more kindly, more efficiently and certainly more sustainably than the corporate elite who now hoard the wealth and power.

The broad agenda for Stop the Machine: Create a New World is to end corporatism and militarism and shift power to the people.

#### TAX THE RICH AND CORPORATIONS

How government funds itself adequately to meet the needs of the people of the United States is one of the key budget questions not being adequately addressed in Washington. Americans know there are huge disparities of wealth between small numbers of extremely wealthy

Americans and the rest of us—the 99 percent.

The U.S. people support taxing wealthy Americans more than they are currently taxed but in addition to this we must end wars, overseas occupations, oil, coal and gas-based sources of energy, all huge profit makers for the elite. All these sources of corporate profit have continuously devastated the environment of our planet. This must stop.

#### END THE WARS, BRING THE TROOPS HOME, CUT MILITARY SPENDING

Military spending is one of the most propagandized areas of policy in the United States. Some media, like NBC (along with MSNBC and related outlets), are owned by a major military contractor, General Electric, which has fired several on air personalities, like Phil Donohue, because they were critical of war. The Pentagon has a massive multi-hundred-million-dollar military propaganda budget that gets information into the media and does a great deal to control media coverage by having retired military officers as the primary commentators on the air. Rarely is opposition to war included in the media. Before every war there is a massive propaganda effort to support the war effort resulting in a spike of war support followed six months or so later with disenchantment and opposition to war.

Americans almost never hear discussed on the air the reality that we are the largest empire in world history—yes, we are a massive empire, but it is a secret

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PHOTO BY ELLEN DAVIDSON

## The DC Occupations Stand in Solidarity

By the Editorial Boards of  
The Occupied Washington Times and  
The Occupied Washington Post:

There are two occupations in Washington, D.C. We fight for the same vision of a nation that promotes the general welfare of its people without regard for—or undue influence from—their access to wealth. *The Occupied Washington Times*, created by the occupiers of McPherson Square, and *The Occupied Washington Post*, created by the occupiers of Freedom Plaza, build our solidarity on the knowledge that we share the support of the majority of American people.

Nearly four in five Americans support passage of a constitutional amendment to overturn the *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* Supreme Court decision, according to a survey from Hart Research Associates. *Citizens United* allowed corporations to spend unlimited amounts of money to advertise in elections, greatly expanding their power to choose politicians and create the policies they want.

A *60 Minutes/Vanity Fair* poll showed that a large majority of Americans choose taxing the rich as their preferred way to address the deficit. Yet most politicians have neglected to seriously consider this approach.

Eighty percent of Americans oppose the *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* Supreme Court decision, according to an ABC News/*Washington Post* poll. *Citizens United* allowed corporations to spend unlimited amounts of money to advertise in elections, greatly expanding their power to choose politicians and create the policies they want.

Eighty-eight percent of Americans supported banning bank bonuses or taxing them at 50 percent, according to a Bloomberg poll taken after the taxpayer-funded bailout. Yet these proposals were never discussed by our elected representatives. And once again this election season, the two major party presidential candidates, as well as the most influential legislators, will be courting the financial sector for tens of millions of dollars in donations.

We the 99 percent declare a democracy that listens more to wealth than to public opinion unethical, illegitimate and self-destructive. We demand that we the American people be heard—for the benefit of the 100 percent.

# Three Weeks Occupying Freedom Plaza

By Kevin Zeese

It has been a whirlwind since the occupation of Freedom Plaza began Oct. 6. We've had rallies and protests, closed down banks and the Chamber of Commerce, protested in the House, Senate and at the White House. We've had speakers from around the world, including some of the Egyptian revolutionaries. The support from the DC community has been incredible—restaurants, churches, unions and individuals have brought us food and warm clothing. The Occupy movement has struck a chord with Americans fed up with the unfairness of the economy and endless wars.

The occupation began with an unpermitted 2,000-person march from the Plaza to the White House and Chamber of Commerce. We shut the chamber down with a jobs protest and then went on to K Street, the center of special interest lobbyists, and took the streets at rush hour.

The next day began with a rally and protest at General Atomics, the maker of drones, followed by a huge antiwar march and rally to the new memorial to Martin Luther King, Jr.

A second protest against drones was held at the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum, where the private security pepper-sprayed peaceful protesters. We later discovered that there was an agent provocateur who confessed that he infiltrated October 2011 with intention of disrupting our protests.

We continued to protest the wars when the secretary of Defense and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff testified before the House Armed Services Committee. This resulted in seven people being arrested.

Freedom Plaza was organized to end militarism and corporatism—the source of our current wars. A protest in the Hart Senate Office Building on October 11 focused on both of these issues. People were again arrested as we forced a temporary shutdown of all the offices in the building.

Wall Street (not the occupation) gave us a gift when it held (can you believe?) a “Wall Street Comes to Washington Healthcare” conference. The focus of the conference was how business interests could profit more from healthcare. Dr. Margaret Flowers confronted the Wall Street investors at their own conference. While Dr. Flowers was inside, 50 others picketed outside, focusing on how Wall Street greed kills those in need. Adara Scarlett described how her 54-year-old father killed himself in order to prevent his family from having massive health care bills.

Occupy Washington DC has focused a lot of attention on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. After shutting it down the first

day, we brought our message back 18 days later when we forced the chamber to lock its doors again over the issue of foreclosures. The chamber actually urges more foreclosures.

A major focus is the banking system—the too-big-to-fail banks that U.S. taxpayers' hard-earned dollars saved from bankruptcy. On Oct. 15 we successfully shut down a Bank of America. The protest, in conjunction with the other DC occupation on K Street, was part of an International Day of Action from Tahrir Square to Times Square in more than 1,500 cities worldwide.

Two Citibanks were also shut down. We focused on Citibank because it has not paid taxes in four years, hiding money off-shore while being the largest recipient of TARP bailout funding. The company's executives earn astronomical salaries while tellers earn \$12.65 an hour. Citibank just announced another quarter of high profits, while continuing to foreclose on homes and hold back loans to small businesses.

How long will Freedom Plaza be occupied? While the National Park Service has given us a four-month permit, this permit does not allow us to “occupy” Freedom Plaza. We are forbidden to camp or sleep on the plaza, nor are we allowed to cook or receive prepared food—all of which we are doing. The Park Police have warned us that we could be removed for occupying Freedom Plaza. They say they are getting pressure from “the administration” to enforce the rules against camping. We are preparing to defend Freedom Plaza in case of a removal attempt in the coming weeks. Much of this and more can be seen at [october2011.org](http://october2011.org).



PHOTO BY ELLEN DAVIDSON

# Seize the Time

## Faith-based communities support the Occupy Movement in Washington, D.C.

By James Lee

On Wednesday, Oct. 26, representatives from faith-based communities throughout the greater Washington, D.C., area met with representatives from the Occupy movement to show solidarity, establish clear lines of communication, and create an active support network with the Occupy movement in Washington.

On both a national and local level, faith leaders and members of faith-based communities have become increasingly aware the call for their support and direct involvement with the Occupy movement.

Furthermore, many faith-based charities, community outreach programs, and social services have witnessed firsthand the growing demand of those in need of assistance as the economy has worsened.

These factors have created a sense of urgency within faith-based communities to more closely align themselves with the Occupy movement, as it calls for economic, political and social justice.

During the Oct. 26 meeting, representatives from the Occupy movement reinforced the heightened awareness among the faith-based attendees that as winter approaches those occupying Washington, D.C., needed a significant increase in local on-site participation with teach-ins, special events, protest actions, and outreach efforts. They also discussed the growing need for material support (food, supplies, equipment, etc.) to help sustain the occupation through the winter.

Representatives from faith-based communities affirmed that they could play a vital role in strengthening and expanding the reach of the occupation movement in the capital in a number of important ways, including:

- 1) Faith base communities organizing among themselves to increase the material resources available to the Occupy movement thus helping sustain it through the challenging winter months ahead
- 2) Faith based communities contributing their honed abilities, knowledge, and experience to effectively project compelling narratives that reinforce the central themes (compassion, accountability, justice) of the Occupy movement to their members and the community at large.
- 3) Faith-based voices supporting the Occupy movement standing in direct contrast to many right-wing political and religious voices that have fostered a punitive and reactionary response to those negatively affected by the current U.S. economic situation
- 4) Faith-based communities educating, promoting and encouraging the direct involvement of their members with the Occupy movement in a variety of ways.
- 5) Faith-based communities offering their knowledge and capacity to affirm the morale, fortitude, vision and spiritual sensibilities of those who desire this type of support

After laying out these possibilities, the participants then broke into four working groups to further clarify these areas of contribution, and to begin the process of taking responsibility for follow-up actions. The working groups

were material support, spiritual support, communication efforts, and on-site participation. Each group developed a number of initiatives to contribute to the overall support of the movement.

### WORKING GROUPS INITIATIVES

#### Material Support Working Group

- Spearhead efforts to organize faith-based communities to provide meals, donated equipment, and supplies to Occupy sites
- Develop a cadre of people to do supply runs and laundry services for occupiers
- Spearhead efforts to engage places of worship located close to Occupy sites to initiate or expand the use of their facilities for occupiers

#### Spiritual Support Working Group

- Sponsor listening circles where Occupy participants who are confronting personal challenges and morale issues can be heard and supported by counselors and friends.
- Create regular interfaith programming for participants who desire spiritual and religious interaction.

#### Communication Efforts Working Group

- Create an interfaith speakers bureau for Occupy representatives and interfaith supporters to educate and elicit support from local faith-based communities.
- Create and distribute a letter of support among faith-based institutions to be published in local print media.
- Assist in local petition effort to keep the occupation open and free from threat of removal by government officials
- Create an "Occupy faith & spirituality" website/blog to promote, educate and link local Occupy movement to local faith-based communities.

#### On-Site Participation Working Group

- Promote a "donate-a-day" where members of local congregations organize to take a day to participate in Occupy meetings, events, and actions.
- Promote an interfaith rapid response pledge that commits local faith-based institutions and organizations members to quickly assemble at Occupy sites should sites be threatened with eviction.
- Actively encourage members of faith-based communities to participate at occupation sites by promoting within these communities.

Those who attended were excited and optimistic by the energy and initiatives presented to support the Occupy movement in a meaningful way.

### THE FUTURE

Plans are currently under way to expand the membership of this effort, implement its initiatives and actively promote its presence among faith-based communities throughout the region.

Summary: At this point in the Occupy movement's short history it has managed to garner the sympathy and



moral support of a large segment of the U.S. population. Now the biggest challenge is to convert a significant portion of this passive support into active and direct support. Such an increase in support will help the movement achieve critical mass within the nation. The commitment by faith-based communities in Washington, D.C., to support the local sites of the Occupy movement represents another doorway that connects people to the movement.

For more information, contact James Lee, (410) 262-8365, nspwashingtondc@gmail.com, or Rev. Justin Martin, dre@uureston.org

James Lee is a member of the Network of Spiritual Progressives-Washington, D.C.

## New York Cops Defy Order to Arrest Hundreds of 'Occupy Albany' Protesters

By Andrew Jones

Governor Andrew "1%" Cuomo can't catch a break—after being protested by Occupy Wall Street last week, this week his own police force is refusing to arrest protesters in his backyard.

Occupy Albany protesters in New York's capital city received an unexpected ally over the week: The state and local authorities.

According to the *Albany Times Union*, New York state troopers and Albany police did not adhere to a curfew crackdown on protesters urged by Gov. Cuomo (D) and Albany Mayor Gerald Jennings.

Mass arrests seemed to be in the cards once Jennings directed officers to enforce the curfew on roughly 700 protesters occupying the city-owned park. But as state police joined the local cops, protesters moved past the property line dividing city and state land.

With protesters acting peacefully, local and state police agreed that low-level arrests could cause a riot, so they decided instead to defy Cuomo and Jennings.

"We don't have those resources, and these people were not causing trouble," a state official said. "The bottom line is the police know policing, not the governor and not the mayor."

Occupy Albany, an offshoot of Occupy Wall Street, has seen its protesters remain as committed as those located at the New York site. At least 30 tents have remained in the park over the weekend.

Andrew Jones is a staff writer/reporter for Raw Story. You can follow him on Twitter @sluggahjells.

# Too Big to Fail

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owners of Zuccotti Park and the New York City police to back down from a proposed attempt to expel them in order to “clean” the premises. These protesters in that one glorious moment did what the traditional “liberal” establishment has steadily refused to do—fight back. And it was deeply moving to watch the corporate rats scamper back to their holes on Wall Street. It lent a whole new meaning to the phrase “too big to fail.”

Tinkering with the corporate state will not work. We will either be plunged into neo-feudalism and environmental catastrophe or we will wrest power from corporate hands. This radical message, one that demands a reversal of the corporate coup, is one the power elite, including the liberal class, is desperately trying to thwart. But the liberal class has no credibility left. It collaborated with corporate lobbyists to neglect the rights of tens of millions of Americans, as well as the innocents in our imperial wars. The best that liberals can do is sheepishly pretend this is what they wanted all along. Groups such as MoveOn and organized labor will find themselves without a constituency unless they at least pay lip service to the protests. The Teamsters’ arrival Friday morning to help defend the park signaled an infusion of this new radicalism into moribund unions rather than a co-opting of the protest movement by the traditional liberal establishment. The union bosses, in short, had no choice. [Daniel Oliverio] photo: Daniel Oliverio

The Occupy Wall Street movement, like all radical movements, has obliterated the narrow political parameters. It proposes something new. It will not make concessions with corrupt systems of corporate power. It holds fast to moral imperatives regardless of the cost. It confronts authority out of a sense of responsibility. It is not

interested in formal positions of power. It is not seeking office. It is not trying to get people to vote. It has no resources. It can’t carry suitcases of money to congressional offices or run millions of dollars of advertisements. All it can do is ask us to use our bodies and voices, often at personal risk, to fight back. It has no other way of defying the corporate state. This rebellion creates a real community instead of a managed or virtual one. It affirms our dignity. It permits us to become free and independent human beings.

Martin Luther King was repeatedly betrayed by liberal supporters, especially when he began to challenge economic forms of discrimination, which demanded that liberals, rather than simply white Southern racists, begin to make sacrifices. King too was a radical. He would not compromise on nonviolence, racism or justice. He understood that movements—such as the Liberty Party, which fought slavery, the suffragists, who fought for women’s rights, the labor movement and the civil rights movement—have always been the true correctives in American democracy. None of those movements achieved formal political power. But by holding fast to moral imperatives they made the powerful fear them. King knew that racial equality was impossible without economic justice and an end to militarism. And he had no intention of ceding to the demands of the liberal establishment that called on him to be calm and patience. “For years, I labored with the idea of reforming the existing institutions in the South, a little change here, a little change there,” King said shortly before he was assassinated. “Now I feel quite differently. I think you’ve got to have a reconstruction of the entire system, a revolution of values.”

King was killed in 1968 when he was in Memphis to support a strike by sanitation

workers. By then he had begun to say that his dream, the one that the corporate state has frozen into a few safe clichés from his 1963 speech in Washington, had turned into a nightmare. King called at the end of his life for massive federal funds to rebuild inner cities, what he called “a radical redistribution of economic and political power,” a complete restructuring of “the architecture of American society.” He grasped that the inequities of capitalism had become the instrument by which the poor would always remain poor. “Call it democracy, or call it democratic socialism,” King said, “but there must be a better distribution of wealth within this country for all of God’s children.” On the eve of King’s murder he was preparing to organize a poor people’s march on Washington, D.C., designed to cause “major, massive dislocations,” a nonviolent demand by the poor, including the white underclass, for a system of economic equality. It would be 43 years before his vision was realized by an eclectic group of protesters who gathered before the gates of Wall Street.

The truth of America is understood only when you listen to voices in our impoverished rural enclaves, prisons and the urban slums, when you hear the words of our unemployed, those who have lost their homes or cannot pay their medical bills, our elderly and our children, especially the quarter of the nation’s children who depend on food stamps to eat, and all who are marginalized. There is more reality expressed about the American experience



PHOTO BY ELLEN DAVIDSON

rapper Nas intones. “Who you gonna elect/ Satan or Satan? In the hood nothing is changing./ We aint got no choices.”

Or listen to hip-hop artist Talib Kweli: “Back in the ‘60s, there was a big push for black ... politicians, and now we have more than we ever had before, but our communities are so much worse. A lot of people died for us to vote, I’m aware of that history, but these politicians are not in touch with people at all. Politics is not the truth to me, it’s an illusion.”

Hope in this age of bankrupt capitalism comes with the return of the language of class conflict and rebellion, language that has been purged from the lexicon of the

**Corporations are not concerned with the common good. They exploit, pollute, impoverish, repress, kill and lie to make money.**

by the debt-burdened young men and women protesting in the parks than by all the chatter of the well-paid pundits and experts that pollutes the airwaves.

What kind of nation is it that spends far more to kill enemy combatants and Afghan and Iraqi civilians than it does to help its own citizens who live below the poverty line? What kind of nation is it that permits corporations to hold sick children hostage while their parents frantically bankrupt themselves to save their sons and daughters? What kind of nation is it that tosses its mentally ill onto urban heating grates? What kind of nation is it that abandons its unemployed while it loots its treasury on behalf of speculators? What kind of nation is it that ignores due process to torture and assassinate its own citizens? What kind of nation is it that refuses to halt the destruction of the ecosystem by the fossil fuel industry, dooming our children and our children’s children?

“America,” Langston Hughes wrote, “never was America to me.”

“The black vote mean [nothing],” the

liberal class, language that defines this new movement. This does not mean we have to agree with Karl Marx, who advocated violence and whose worship of the state as a utopian mechanism led to another form of enslavement of the working class, but we have to learn again to speak in the vocabulary Marx employed. We have to grasp, as Marx and Adam Smith did, that corporations are not concerned with the common good. They exploit, pollute, impoverish, repress, kill and lie to make money. They throw poor families out of homes, let the uninsured die, wage useless wars to make profits, poison and pollute the ecosystem, slash social assistance programs, gut public education, trash the global economy, plunder the U.S. Treasury and crush all popular movements that seek justice for working men and women. They worship money and power. And, as Marx knew, unfettered capitalism is a revolutionary force that consumes greater and greater numbers of human lives until it finally consumes itself. The dead zone in

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## Too Big to Fail

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the Gulf of Mexico is the perfect metaphor for the corporate state. It is part of the same nightmare experienced in postindustrial mill towns of New England and the abandoned steel mills of Ohio. It is a nightmare that Iraqis, Pakistanis and Afghans, living in terror and mourning their dead, endure daily.

What took place early Friday morning in Zuccotti Park was the first salvo in a long struggle for justice. It signaled a step backward by the corporate state in the face of popular pressure. And it was carried out by ordinary men and women who sleep at night on concrete, get soaked in rainstorms, eat donated food and have nothing as weapons but their dignity, resilience and courage. It is they, and they alone, who hold out the possibility of salvation. And if we join them we might have a chance.

Chris Hedges, formerly a New York Times correspondent, writes a regular column for Truthdig.com and is the author of many books, most recently *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*.

## We the People

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In his remarks in D.C., Hedges challenged us all by saying “Either you are rebel or a slave. Here are some excerpts from his speech:

“There are no excuses left. Either you join the revolt taking place on Wall Street and in the financial districts of other cities across the country or you stand on the wrong side of history. Either you obstruct, in the only form left to us, which is through civil disobedience, the plundering by the criminal class on Wall Street and accelerated destruction of the ecosystem that sustains the human species, or become the passive enabler of a monstrous evil. Either you taste, feel and smell the intoxication of freedom and revolt or sink into the miasma of despair and apathy. Either you are a rebel or a slave.”

There is indeed, “something happening here.” But what it is, is getting clearer. The people are rising up to take back our country. We stand together in this new movement.

Michael Orange is a member of local Chapter 27 Veterans for Peace, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and the author of *Fire in the Hole: A Mortarman in Vietnam*. Cynthia is also a long-time peace activist and author of *Shock Waves: A Practical Guide to Living with a Loved One's PTSD*.

Submitted for VetSpeak.org

# Black America: Time to Rejoin the Developing Revolution

*What happens to a dream deferred?/  
Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?/Or  
fester like a sore—/And then run?/Does it  
stink like rotten meat?/Or crust and sugar  
over—/like a syrupy sweet?/Maybe it just  
sags like a heavy load./Or does it explode?*

—Langston Hughes

By Larry Pinkney

The struggles for economic, political, and social justice of everyday Black, White, Brown, Red, and Yellow peoples has been, and remains, a long, arduous, and protracted one. The legacy of Black America in this regard has been a particularly sterling one.

The wealthy elite of this nation have always sought to mask, co-opt, and distort the history of these ongoing struggles.

bury genuine people's movements remains precisely the same.

Even as the United States, and humankind as a whole, have entered into the 21st century, the corporate elite of this nation has dipped yet again into its hypocritical and bloody bag of tricks to neutralize the legitimate yearning of Black America (and everyday people of all colors) for economic, political, and social justice nationally and globally. A new trick was needed. The essence of that trick was put forth by the corporate elite in the form of the articulate, nominally “black,” de facto Wall Street-backed Barack Obama.

It was decided that the most effective way to neutralize Black America's cultural, political, economic, and social struggle would be to present us with the illusion

everyday Black people in this nation has virtually tripled. The incarceration rate of Black people under the Obama regime (including the privatization of prisons) has more than doubled. The rate of Black people attending colleges and universities has, and continues, to rapidly dwindle. The unconstitutional so-called “Patriot Act” has been extended and enhanced, as has the U.S. program of international kidnapping and torture known euphemistically as “extraordinary rendition.” Openness in government has become null and void. Universal single payer health care remains but “a dream deferred.” Judicial justice is now overwhelmingly a sick joke. And of course U.S. wars abroad, and economic austerity at home, continue unabated.

None of these horrible realities should come as a surprise in view of the fact that Obama's past and present “hope and change” rhetoric was, and continues to be, nothing more than a corporate-brand smoke screen. Instead of “hope and change,” what Black America (and indeed all everyday people in this nation) have received, is the smoke and mirror reality of the corporate / military's systemic rope and chain.

What Barack Obama arrogantly refers to as “whining” on the part of everyday people who are in terrible pain, is what is known, in any serious democracy, as being held accountable to one's constituency.

But of course Obama's de facto constituency is the corporate pharmaceutical, insurance, and banking, etc. corporate elite. It is time for everyday Black Americans to return to our proud legacy of serious struggle. We have been bamboozled and economically and politically pimped long enough. Enough already!

Indeed, what does happen to a dream deferred? The time has come for everyday Black Americans to collectively and resoundingly answer that question for Barack Obama and his Democrat and Republican corporate accomplices. We must remember the words of Frederick Douglass: “Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will.” It is time for systemic change. Time to collectively rejoin the developing revolution in this nation and around the world! Wake up and organize as a part of this protracted struggle while there is yet time!

Onward, then, my sisters and brothers! Onward!

BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board Member, Larry Pinkney, is a veteran of the Black Panther Party.



Since the very inception of this nation, color, gender, and class have consistently been used by the aforementioned wealthy elite to divide, stifle, and bury revolutionary movements. This is nothing new.

However, the wealthy elite (now known as the corporate elite) have, like mad scientists, consistently tweaked their insidious designs against ordinary everyday people. Their objective to divide, distort, stifle, and

of change, but with absolutely no real systemic change at all. Thus, while many everyday people of all colors were euphorically celebrating and bamboozled by this illusion, the clock was in fact being turned backwards by the corporate elite, by way of their articulate tool, the corporate-brand Barack Obama.

Under the corporate, profit-driven auspices of Barack Obama, joblessness among

# Majority

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to most Americans. This makes public opinion hard to measure, but even with this the military budget is not popular with Americans.

A majority of Americans prefer cutting military spending to reduce the federal deficit rather than taking money from public retirement and health programs.

## PROTECT THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET, STRENGTHEN SOCIAL SECURITY AND PROVIDE IMPROVED MEDICARE FOR ALL

The U.S. public supports—by large majorities over many years—a single-payer healthcare system, improved Medicare for all. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, President Obama and the Democratic Party leadership kept single payer out of the discussion of healthcare reform. The corporate media, with the help of the wealth-funded Tea Party, has put out the false impression that the people trust the market to handle healthcare when the opposite is true. Americans very much support the social safety net that they do have—Social Security, Medicare, food stamps and unemployment insurance. And, if a real debate were allowed, with accurate information on how social and economic safety nets work, what they cost and how they build the economy, there would very likely be broad support for a much stronger social safety net.

Physicians also consistently show high levels of support for a single-payer system. A majority of physicians (86 percent) agree that it is the responsibility of society, through the government, to ensure that everyone has access to good medical care. New Hampshire physicians, including 81 percent of primary care clinicians, indicated they “would favor a simplified payer system in which public funds, collected through taxes, were used to pay directly for services to meet the basic healthcare needs of all citizens.”

## END CORPORATE WELFARE FOR OIL COMPANIES AND OTHER BIG BUSINESS INTERESTS

Even though it is not often discussed in the corporate media, Americans are well aware of corporate welfare or crony capitalism, i.e. tax breaks and giveaways to well-connected business interests that donate to political campaigns. The public gets particularly angry about corporate welfare when they see corporations profiting and taking taxpayer dollars. The current focus in this regard is on the oil industry. An overwhelming majority of Americans support eliminating tax credits for the oil and gas industries.

Another area where the public has recently shown opposition to corporate welfare is the nuclear industry. This is an industry that ONLY exists because the federal government will underwrite loans to it and provide insurance for it. Private investors will not invest in nuclear—the most expensive energy source, very slow to come on line and one which has enormous risks—without the federal government being involved.

## PROTECT WORKER RIGHTS INCLUDING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, CREATE JOBS AND RAISE WAGES

During the recent debt ceiling debate by a ratio of more than two to one, Americans said that creating jobs should be a higher priority than spending cuts.

A December 2009 Bloomberg poll showed Americans favored job creation as a top priority. Two-thirds of Americans surveyed backed additional spending on infrastructure and six of 10 support more spending on alternative energy to stimulate job growth. A tax credit for businesses that hire new workers also gains backing from seven of 10 Americans.

The National Employment Law Project public opinion findings show that raising the minimum wage has significant bipartisan support across the country. Polls show that even in the current economy, voters support raising the minimum wage by a three-to-one margin. Most people believe raising the minimum wage will help the economy rather than hurt it. A two-thirds majority favor increasing the minimum

CARTOON BY "A. REDFIELD"/SYD HOFF C. 1935



"Give him a nickel, sweetheart. After all, you made a couple of million on the war."

wage to \$10 an hour. Even a majority of Republicans—51 percent favor the higher minimum wage.

This is not new, the public has consistently supported raising the minimum wage; a U.S. Department of Labor report in 1996 states: “The American public supports increasing the minimum wage by a solid margin. Nearly every survey finds overwhelming support for raising the minimum wage.”

## TRANSITION TO A CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY, REVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

The U.S. public has recognized that the future is clean energy. There is clear opposition to dependence on foreign oil—which is the way the corporate interests like to limit the question. Americans want to go further and see the development of a new clean energy society. If the media reported accurately on the potential to achieve a carbon-free/nuclear-free energy future there would be even greater support, but already there are large majorities who support this transition. If corporate welfare were ended and taxpayer support for the new energy economy treated tax payers as investors who shared in the profits of this new economy support would greatly increase because wealth created by all of us would be shared by all of us.

For decades Americans have expressed concern about environmental degradation, especially concern about the quality of our water and air. An area of particular challenge is climate change, where the media

cover the issue as if there were real debate in the scientific community, when in fact among scientists who work in climate-related fields there is virtually no debate. Again, the corporate media seem intent on misleading the public.

Even in the midst of a collapsing economy and rising energy prices, the Pew Research Center found that when asked: “Right now, which ONE of the following do you think should be the more important priority for U.S. energy policy: keeping energy prices low or protecting the environment?” a majority favored protecting the environment, while only little more than a third favored keeping energy prices low.

## GET MONEY OUT OF POLITICS

As President Obama crisscrosses the country seeking to raise a billion dollars for the most expensive re-election campaign in history, it is important to remember that in 2000 nearly three-fourths of the voters said Texas Gov. George W. Bush’s \$70 million fundraising tally is “excessive and a sign of what’s wrong with politics today.”

For a very long time Americans have perceived government to be corrupted by the financing of campaigns. Nearly all Americans, 93 percent, think politicians do special favors for their campaign contributors; 80 percent think it happens “often,” with more than two-thirds thinking special favors for contributors tend to be unethical. Campaign finance is now so unrestricted since the Supreme Court ruling on *Citizens United* that it can fairly be described as legal bribery. This recent *Citizens United* decision opening the door to unlimited donations by corporations and individuals has increased and broadened opposition among the American public.

Getting money out of politics is a key first step to reform elections in the United States, but it is only a first step of many. Money is not the only problem in U.S. elections.

If our government actually represented the will of the American people on these seven issues, the nation would be headed in a sustainable and prosperous direction. If the will of the people were predominant, we would cut the deficit by ending the current wars, along with significant cuts in basic military spending, increases in taxes on the wealthy and corporations, as well as ending corporate welfare.

The priorities of the people would be protecting and strengthening the social safety net, improved Medicare for all, job creation, raising wages, protecting worker rights to bargain collectively, investment and transition to a clean, energy economy.

With these changes there would be no deficit crisis and rather than an economy in collapse, there would be a sustainable economy from which all Americans would prosper.

# WE THE PEOPLE— A NEW MOVEMENT

*There's something happening here. What it is ain't exactly clear ...*

—From “For What It’s Worth,”  
Steven Stills and Buffalo Springfield, 1967

By Michael and Cynthia Orange

**W**e participated in the “Stop the Machine! Create a New World” gathering in Washington, D.C., to launch the occupation of Freedom Plaza. What we saw in D.C. and have been seeing in broadcasts from some of the other “occupations” throughout the country convinces us that we are witnessing the birth of a new movement.

For months, we felt compelled to make the trip from our home in St. Paul, Minn., primarily because the focus of the gathering in Washington was to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the U.S. war and occupation of Afghanistan. It was also to “connect the dots” that link our imperial wars as the root causes of our country’s debilitating domestic problems. The military-industrial-media complex bears increasing responsibility for our growing economic inequity, chronic joblessness and union bashing, defunded public education and public services, decaying public infrastructure, the assault on the environment, the health care debacle, and the hijacking of our democracy by the rich and powerful.

We’re not novices at this. We’ve been peace activists for over four decades now, sustained by an abiding hope that eventually the people will rise up to take back our country. This DC Occupation is not new but it’s certainly different. It’s the latest chapter in a two-century history of struggle by Americans who sought fair treatment.

In addition to the war economy focus, the DC Occupation embraced a broader range of interests that garner wider support and are more in harmony with the Occupy Wall Street purpose. In fact, a large majority of the American people consistently support ending the wars, creating a more equitable tax system, ending corporate welfare, protecting the social safety net and worker rights, transitioning to a clean energy economy, and reversing environmental degradation. Of absolute necessity is getting the money out of politics.

We were very impressed with the event organization. This is in contrast to some of the corporate media spin that wants you to believe that Occupy Wall Street and the similar actions are led by a bunch of angry losers or old hippies who don’t have a clue. In D.C., there were tents for the media, legal aid, first aid, free donated food, electronic tie-ins, and a long line of porta-potties.

The small grassy side of the totally paved plaza became a crowded campground for the hundreds who spent the night there. As the crowd grew to nearly a thousand, the buzz of hundreds of conversations from people of all ages, races, and walks of life created their own energy. There was music, dancing, laughter, and deep discussion. And everywhere, there were people with signs, most of them



PHOTO BY ELLEN DAVIDSON

hand lettered:

- A Vietnam vet’s sign read: “How’s the war economy working for you?”
- A man held a sign that said, “I wish I could afford my own politician.”
- A middle-aged woman’s signs said, “You screw us, we multiply.”
- A white bearded veteran held a U.S. flag with corporate logos where the stars should be.
- A young woman stood alone holding a piece of brown cardboard with penciled letters that read “Another single mother in foreclosure.”
- There were two children, one with a sign reading, “Please don’t steal my future,” and the other with “Toddlers Against Corporate Greed.”
- “Capitalism ate Democracy” read another.
- And there were Vets for Peace banners from across the country.

The women from CODEPINK created a cardboard village with labels such as “Foreclosed Dream House.” It served as a playground for kids during the day and shelter for the overnighters to “rest” after the Park Police banned sleeping and the use of tents on the plaza.

A display of worn combat boots carried tags that listed their now-dead owners. The backdrop for the main stage was a twenty-foot-wide, parchment-colored banner, entitled “We the People,” which proclaimed the text and calligraphy of the Preamble to the Constitution. In the middle of the plaza was a companion banner entitled, “We the Corporations” with a parody of the Preamble complete with a host of corporate logos.

To begin the formal program, the Raging Grannies from Madison sang original songs that we had first heard when we attended the massive pro-labor rallies there last spring.

During the evening program, we heard from an Iraq War vet and his artist friend who had biked 6,000 miles to bring attention through their music to the stupidity of our ongoing wars.

We spoke with event “Peacemakers” whose job was to quell hot tempers and prevent violence. They were called into action at the demonstration two days later at the Smithsonian’s military drone exhibit when an agent provocateur in the group created a violent situation.

The incident serves as an excellent example of how peace demonstrations are often infiltrated and discredited. Patrick Howley, an editor at the conservative magazine *The American Spectator*, boasted that he shoved his way into the museum and this led to the security guards dousing the group with pepper spray. This is what Howley wrote about his motives: “As far as anyone knew I was part of this cause—a cause that I had infiltrated the day before in order to mock and undermine [it] in the pages of *The American Spectator*.”

There is a striking contrast with the two-year-old Tea Party whose members are also voicing their anger at conditions for the average person. Unlike the Occupy movement, the Tea Party has been co-opted by the corporate elite who have bankrolled it and used their corporate media to mold opinion and to serve their own interests and those of the Republican Party. In contrast, these occupations, like the one we attended in D.C., are part of an organic grass-roots movement that actually resists outside control from even traditional progressive groups (e.g. organized labor).

Like the peace movement of 40 years ago, we protesters are angry and completely frustrated by the imperial wars and the oligarchic control of the many by the wealthy and powerful few.

David Morris of the Institute for Local Self reliance describes it, “We’re mad at the devastation wrought in the last four years by the toxic combination of unrestrained greed and concentrated wealth .... We’re mad at Wall Street for taking our money and giving nothing back .... We’re mad at the 1 percent of the country who make decisions that enrich themselves while impoverishing the rest of us.” His article, “It’s Labor vs. Capital, Stupid,” is rich with the facts to back up his assertions.

As Gerald Gannon, fellow member of Veterans for Peace, writes, “Let me be clear here: we are not anti-business or anti-capitalism .... The great majority of entrepreneurs, sole proprietors and small-to-medium sized business [that] provide most of the jobs in our country and practice true capitalism ... [are] more than willing to pit themselves against the competition for a fair share of the marketplace .... But the giant ‘multinational’ corporations seek to stifle competition .... These Godzilla-like corporations built on the backs of American workers and with American dollars now deny the people in the country of their origins—jobs for their livelihood, their tax dollars, the fundamental control of their own government and any allegiance what so ever. They are driven only by insatiable lust for ever greater profits with no concern at all for the American people or the environment in which we all live. They have been allowed to metastasize into traitorous monsters ....”

Chris Hedges, the keynote speaker for first night of the DC Occupation, has stated, “The greatest gift the occupation has given us is a blueprint for how to fight back. And this blueprint is being transferred to cities and parks across the country.” As we write this in mid-October, there are nearly 1,500 occupations in the United States, and many more around the world.

*continued on page 5 ...*

# Arrested for ‘Assaulting’ Leon Panetta

Assault? Who—or what—did I assault? I asked the police officer incredulously as I sat in his office at the police station, handcuffed to the wall. “Well, looks like it was Leon Panetta himself,” the officer responded as he flipped through a pile of paperwork.

Me? A 22-year-old mild-mannered peace activist, assaulted the Secretary of Defense? I had simply tried to tell him how I felt about the wars. On the morning of October 13 about 25 activists who are occupying Washington, D.C., went on a field trip to Congress. We wanted to attend the House Armed Services Committee hearing where Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Martin Dempsey were testifying about “lessons learned by the Department of Defense over the preceding decade” and “how those

lessons might be applied in the future in light of anticipated reductions in defense spending.” After all, these hearings are open to the public. And shouldn’t we have a say in where our money is being spent?

That morning about 25 of us got to the hearing several hours early so we could be first in line to get in. It didn’t take long for the Capitol Police to appear. They began to congregate around us, several of them already holding the flexi-cuffs they use now in lieu of traditional handcuffs (they’re recyclable, so I learned).

Soon they started letting people into the hearing room—but only five at a time, and

the police escorted us as if we were unruly children. They told us any form of demonstrating would result in immediate ejection from the hearing and possible arrest.

A few minutes after all the congresspeople had slowly made their way to their seats, Panetta and Dempsey entered the room flanked by several staffers. Media cameras crowded around them at the witness table as they sat down, about 15 feet away from me.

I sprang out of my seat, pulling out a homemade sign that read: FUND MY EDUCATION, NOT YOUR WARS. I had been in congressional hearings many times, and I had never come so close to risking arrest, but I was determined to get my message out. “Secretary Panetta, when are we going to stop funding war and start rebuilding America? We have been at war for almost half my life and guys my age have PTSD. My generation deserves better!” I continued to shout as Capitol Hill police dragged me out the door.

## ‘WE! ARE! THE 99 PERCENT!’

Outside people who were not let into the hearing chanted the Occupy Wall Street slogan, “We! Are! The 99 percent!”

Michael Patterson, from Anchorage, Alaska, who has been sleeping out in McPherson Square in Washington for eight days and nights spoke out next. Michael is a 21-year-old vet who was an interrogator in Iraq—at the age of 18! He has been extremely affected by what he saw there and as soon as Panetta started speaking, Michael denounced U.S. actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. “You are murdering people. I’ve seen it. You are murdering people,” he shouted as the police tackled him.

Michael was overcome with emotion and as a result his disruption was the most intense—and hopefully the most effective. Some reports mention that members of Congress seemed startled by his message. When asked about his motivation for this action, Michael responded, “Certain elements of the American government are accomplices in genocide. These wars have caused the death of up to a million Iraqis, an unknown number of Afghans, and thousands of U.S. soldiers. They have ruined the lives of millions. The truth is out there and people are just choosing apathy. It’s time to hold those accountable for what they have done and when the time comes, the excuse ‘I was just following orders’ will not be acceptable.”

After Michael, six other individuals stood up during the hearing and expressed how they felt about these wars, whether by holding up peace signs silently, speaking softly or shouting and holding up a sign.

After each person was arrested, the rest clapped in support, and the other activists still waiting in the hall chanted continuously, calling for an end to the wars.

Eight of us were hauled off in a police wagon to the station, where I spent over six hours being processed and narrowly avoided spending the night in jail. They gave us all citations, and everyone was charged with disrupting Congress, except for me. I was charged with simple assault of Leon Panetta!

I was nowhere near Secretary Panetta during my outburst but it turned out that my charge, “simple assault,” is a crime that causes “a victim to fear violence.” It is a sad day when a government official feels endangered by a citizen practicing her freedom of speech. Is our highest military official after the President frightened by a young woman with a sign calling for our funds to be spent on education, not war?

After the activists were thrown out of the hearing room, Representative Pingree put Secretary Panetta on the spot, asking what he thought about the protests, since they reflect the views of the majority of people throughout the country, who want to see an end to the wars. He responded by acknowledging our frustration after 10 years of war and talking about the timelines set up to withdraw the troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The fact that the secretary of Defense was forced to acknowledge and respond to our concerns is in itself a victory. The strength our messages carried did not just come from us, or the people in the hallway supporting us, but from people rising up all over the country—and it is clear that our government officials are starting to feel the heat.

## GROWING MOVEMENT

Since the story of the seven arrests hit the news, I have received a surprising amount of support from friends and strangers. Several of the messages are actually from active members of the military who told me our actions inspired them to seriously think about what they are doing overseas. A few mentioned that it sparked discussion among the people they are serving with. For the most part, they were struck by people’s willingness to risk arrest for something they feel so passionately about.

We are part of the growing Occupy movement sweeping the country, and we are becoming much stronger than the sum of our parts. Drawing strength in numbers, both seasoned and new activists are feeling an incredible sense of empowerment and are taking more risks—including arrestable offenses—so that our voices will be heard. We are determined that our policy makers listen to the sentiment of the people, as expressed in the chants that were echoing in the hallway: We are the 99 percent and we say no to all these wars!

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## We Invite You: Talk About the Issues in Freedom Plaza

By Dr. Margaret Flowers

One of the beautiful aspects of the occupation is that it has brought people out into the open to talk about the issues. Everywhere I look right now as I sit in the media tent and gaze out at Freedom Plaza in Washington, D.C., people are engaged in conversations. Some are standing in groups, and some are sitting in circles in the assembly area or between the tents.

Throughout the day, people wander through Freedom Plaza to read the signs scattered about “Human Needs not Corporate Greed,” “We are the 99 percent and so are you,” and “Money for people, not for wars.” This is the first step in this evolution to a more peaceful, just and sustainable planet. For too long we have been focused on divisions. Now we are finding what unites us. The days of sitting in silence and blaming ourselves for not working hard enough are over.

The first step in the process of change is awareness of the problem. We are encouraging people to come out of their homes. Talk to those around you. Talk about the way things are with increasing wealth disparity and poverty. Talk about the way you want things to be—a society based on openness, acceptance, honesty, transparency and kindness.

We invite you to join us in Freedom Plaza each evening during the General Assembly. It begins at 6 pm eastern time. You can join us in person or via livestream on the website [october2011.org](http://october2011.org) and check out the schedule of events. We devote a portion of each meeting to discussing the issues and the solutions we would like to see.

Join us, talk about it and share what you learn with your family, friends and colleagues. This is the first step in the nonviolent transformation of our country.