

End of the Reagan Narrative?

Exclusive: Election 2012 may turn on whether Ronald Reagan's narrative of evil government and beneficent tax cuts for the rich has finally run its course and has been replaced by a new narrative demanding government intervention to save the American middle-class, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

As yet another statue of Ronald Reagan is unveiled a \$1 million one at Washington's National Airport which was renamed in his honor in the mid-1990s the key question about the 40th president is whether his long and destructive era is finally coming to an end.

More than any other political figure, it was Ronald Reagan who put America on its present course toward stunning income inequality and into a brave new world of deregulated industries, which were then able to exploit lax government controls to devastate the economy.

It was Reagan who experimented with "supply side economics" which held that slashing the top marginal tax rates for the rich by half or more would eliminate the federal deficit and supposedly help everyone by letting the extra money at the top trickle down.

It was Reagan who declared that "government is the problem" and convinced many middle-class Americans especially white men that they should despise "big government" as a threat to their liberty and trust their financial security to the kindness, wisdom and generosity of corporate chieftains.

It was Reagan who demanded a massive reinvestment in the U.S. military, even as America's principal adversary, the Soviet Union, was in rapid decline. Reagan also allied the United States with some of the world's most brutal regimes and insurgent movements, as long as they identified themselves as "anti-communist."

It also was Reagan who transformed the Republican Party into a political organization disdainful of science and empiricism and devoted to retaining its power at almost any price. For Reagan and his P.R. team, the goal was always "perception management," controlling how average Americans saw the world, not how it actually was. [For details, see Robert Parry's [*Lost History*](#).]

Though it may be true that the current crop of Republicans is even more extreme than Reagan, that is mostly because today's GOPers have dropped the few nuances that Reagan retained because of the political constraints that he faced. Three decades into Reagan's transformation of America, the Right's accumulated power

has allowed the embrace of even more radical positions.

As an implicit acknowledgement of Reagan's continued spell over the U.S. population, Democrats often try to find some common ground with the beloved Gipper, often using the phrase "even Ronald Reagan wouldn't have gone that far." But the truth is that Reagan composed the political music that today's Republican Party plays.

The personable Reagan was the Pied Piper who led middle-class Americans dancing happily toward their own oblivion. Without him, it is hard to envision why so many downwardly mobile Americans would rally to the Tea Party and its demands for lower taxes on the already rich and fewer regulations on today's corporate masters of the universe.

When the only realistic way to restrain the immense power of the rich and the corporations is through a democratized and energized federal government, Reagan's memory instead inspires the Tea Party and many typical Americans to demand that government get out of the way.

Beginning of the End?

Yet, the question today is whether the days of Reagan's enduring narrative are finally coming to a close. Has the Occupy Wall Street movement, which protests the gross economic inequality that Reaganism wrought, eclipsed the Reaganesque Tea Party?

The OWS narrative is that Reagan's (and George W. Bush's) tax cuts for the rich and the deregulation of Wall Street (that had bipartisan support) greased the skids for the nation sliding into the current swamp of concentrated wealth at the top and a shrinking middle-class.

Though the "Occupy" activists have so far shunned laying out specific policy recommendations, they have hoisted signs that demand that the coddling of corporations end, that the rich pay their fair share, and that the United States commit itself to becoming a more equitable society.

That goal can only be achieved by redistributing some of that concentrated wealth, by rebuilding the middle-class and by restoring jobs that disappeared over the past few decades as U.S. corporations either sought cheaper labor abroad or boosted productivity by replacing manpower with machines.

Reagan and the "free-marketers" who followed him encouraged these trends by incentivizing greed via sharply lower income taxes for the rich and by negotiating "free trade" agreements with low-wage countries.

Suddenly, the wealthy who had seen about 70 percent of their top tranche of income recycled back into American society through income taxes were getting to keep more than twice as much under Reagan-era reductions in the progressive tax rates. That prompted corporate chieftains to push for much higher pay for themselves, since they could keep much more of it, even as they took steps to hold down the pay of their employees.

To jack-up profits even more, U.S.-based companies shipped millions of factory jobs overseas. And, as capital gains taxes were slashed, too, investors kept even more money than those who earned their pay from work, explaining why multi-billionaire investor Warren Buffett could pay a lower tax rate than his secretary.

The consequences on the United States from these three decades under various forms of Reaganomics (including the neo-liberalism of Bill Clinton and the full Reagan restoration under George W. Bush) are now apparent: massive federal debt for the public sector and major concentrations of wealth in the private sector.

These twin factors have fed two competing political movements: one, identified with the Tea Party, demands sharp cuts in government spending on domestic programs and even fewer regulations on business, and the other, associated with Occupy Wall Street, implicitly favors higher taxes on the rich to fund jobs and tighter government controls on reckless gambling by the banks.

The danger for the Republicans is that they have gone pretty much all in with the Tea Party. Some top Republicans are even advocating raising income taxes on the poor and middle-class in order to fund more tax cuts for the rich.

So, if the momentum shifts from the Tea Party side to the Occupy Wall Street side, Republicans could find themselves caught in a dangerous crosscurrent. They must hope that the Reagan narrative hostile to government and favorable to the rich isn't swept away before the November 2012 elections.

On the other hand, it is less clear that the Democrats will benefit substantially from a more anti-corporate tide, since they have done their best over the past several decades to muddy the waters regarding their differences with Reaganism, not wanting to be labeled "tax-and-spenders" or "anti-business."

Still, as careful as many Democrats have been to stay in the middle of the mainstream, President Barack Obama and others have at least offered some limited proposals for raising taxes on the rich to pay for infrastructure investments and other jobs programs. That could put them in position to be pulled along by a favorable public current.

As imperfect a test as Election 2012 is sure to be, it seems likely to offer

some measure of whether the Reagan narrative has finally run its course.

[For more on related topics, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Reagan's Greed Is Good Folly](#)" and "[How Greed Destroys America](#)" or Robert Parry's *Lost History, Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, now available in a three-book set for the discount price of only \$29. For details, [click here](#).]

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at [neckdeepbook.com](#). His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth'* are also available there.

Modern-Day 'Hooverville' with Hope

The response to Occupy Wall Street is personal for many participants and visitors alike. For historian William Loren Katz, the iconic protest in Lower Manhattan was a reminder of Depression-era "Hoovervilles" – but with a youthful optimism.

By William Loren Katz

On Saturday, my wife and I visited Occupy Wall Street to see history in the making, and to donate two of my relevant books to the OWS library. The entrance point on Broadway of Zuccotti Park, formerly called Liberty Plaza, stops one cold.

You face a dozen or so men and women of various ages holding large, hand-written signs telling how job loss, lack of decent pay or no affordable health care brought poverty and/or tragedy to their door. Only one or two signs are overtly political.

Entering the encampment reminded this historian of the 1930s Great Depression "Hoovervilles", but with a clientele that was energetic, intellectual, eager to talk. It was an odd mix as international and American tourists pushed into the OWS crowd of young and old, men and women of all classes and races.

Jostling together were jobless workers, union members, students with large college repayment loans and others of various ages who either landed at the bottom of a sinking economy, or thought they were headed that way. Establishing

a beachhead to challenge Wall Street seemed to cancel any morbid sense of victimhood from what I could see.

These mainly young people quickly found they are hardly alone or uncared for. Restaurant donations led to an extended food counter of gourmet and ethnic choices including a fancy Greek spinach pie and a classy Bavarian fudge cake. Men and women periodically arrived to donate home-made muffins and other baked goods.

Casually dressed OWS residents and better dressed visitors crowded the chow line. If "class warfare" was on anyone's mind it was absent at ground level. Nobody seemed to mind the presence of visitors who looked like the 1 percent.

Good cheer ruled. An energetic trombone and tuba band blared catchy tunes as a few young men and women improvised a dance of sorts.

Hoping their time had come, representatives of traditional socialist groups handed out printed screeds. Far more numerous and impressive were the young people handing out personally scribbled Xeroxed statements detailing their political complaints, pointing to those responsible for the financial disaster, or decrying war. Many people pleaded for a new and loving community. Words were soft-spoken and politeness was common.

People of all ages and both sexes swept the grounds and cleaned up for the live-ins and tourists. One sign pointedly said, "Take care of your own stuff!" Another woman's sign demanded, "No more photographs!" One sign announced specific times for "nonviolent training" and another told when and where in Zuccotti Park people would gather to celebrate the upcoming Jewish holiday.

In several corners, circular groups were engaged in earnest debate about new models of thought, political strategies, and public policies, or how to keep the park policed, neat and livable.

Here in a one block park ringed by towering skyscrapers and a nearby quiet, unsettling, and largely ignored police presence, was a community trying to plant peaceful roots.

Perhaps if we can demonstrate a warm, neighborly model, they seemed to say, the world will know there is a better way than overseas wars and feeding Fat Cat capitalism. Society, their presence said, needs to control the corporations that now own it and get to select the wrecking crew that runs it. Voters need to take government back. Maybe a new system is required.

If President Bush suddenly appeared, a few might rush to arrest him for war crimes, but I felt many more would parade him proudly into their models of

peaceful living. A Tahrir Square courage and tenacity laced by youthful American optimism marks this occupation. It may not get where it wants, but not for lack of effort, and neither is it leaving its new home.

The OWS failure to issue specific demands does not signal a lack of basic agreement. They agree current U.S. wars should end, the rich should pay their share, jobs must be created. They insist Wall Street greed has not only produced poverty, militarism and income inequality, but has blocked the march to a just and democratic society. And they are ready and eager to march.

My wife and I began to leave pushing our way through residents, visitors and those clearing and cleaning the park. One middle-age man paused, looked up from his broom and thanked me for coming. I thanked him for being there.

William Loren Katz is the author of *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage* and forty other books. His website is: www.williamlkatz.com, where this article first appeared.

Occupy Wall Street's Elegant Message

The mainstream news media still seems baffled by the Occupy protests, wanting them to spell out specific demands mostly likely, so experts and pundits can then tear the ideas down. So far, the protesters are getting their message across through their simple presence, Danny Schechter reports.

By Danny Schechter

One of the most frequently repeated, recycled and dismissive questions about Occupy Wall Street is its supposed lack of an "agenda." The "what do you people want" question has featured in media interviews almost to the exclusion of all others.

It's as if the movement won't be taken seriously by some, unless and until, it enunciates a list of "demands" and defines itself in a way that can allow others, especially a cynical media, to label and pigeonhole it. (So, it won't be taken seriously then either.)

Many are just frothing at the mouth for some political positions they can expose as shallow or absurd. Teams of pundits are being primed to go on the attack once they have some bullet points to refute.

Many police departments don't need bullet points to go on the attack. They have

been having a field day arresting occupiers in many cities, while collecting overtime and readying their own bullets (rubber and otherwise) as needed.

Some on Wall Street already denounce these adversaries as “unsophisticated” for their formulation of the 99 percent versus the 1 percent. You’d expect the 1 percent to reject this way of seeing the world.

On the Right, there is no factual inaccuracy or bizarre incident they won’t invoke to dismiss a movement they lack the mental tools to understand.

The Drudge Report was delighted to expose an incident involving public masturbation in one city.

Some gun nut wrote: “Don’t be mistaken. The Wall Street protestors aren’t peaceful hippies congregating about greed or social inequality. They are uniting to destroy America and everything we stand for. Their model is the ‘Arab Spring’ which discharged their Governments in favor of anti-Israel agitators and Muslim fundamentalists. They are NOT about freedom, but about World domination and total control. And Obama is supporting them fully.”

Hmm.

Others like Reverend Jesse Jackson want more engagement with legislative issues and even the backing of candidates.

Democratic candidates, even progressive ones like Elizabeth Warren who’s running for the U.S. Senate in Massachusetts, seem ambivalent about backing the occupations. Most are taking their cue from President Obama who only says he understands their “frustrations.”

Some on the Left, including friends of mine, seem to suffer from undisguised vanguardism and want the Movement to raise the red flag right away, despite all the anarchists, libertarians and Democrats among them.

Here’s Bill Bowles writing from London “Although many on the established Left are claiming OWS as their own, latching on to the anti-capitalist theme that figures prominently, at least in some locations, it’s clear that the focus of the OWS ‘movement’ varies greatly from place to place.

“Thus where it all started, in downtown Manhattan, the focus is very much on *capitalist criminals* rather than *criminal capitalism*. But little or no mention of the dreaded word – socialism, ironically for fear of alienating even those who occupy, never mind what the rabid corporate/state media does with that which shall remain nameless.”

These are old and, in many instances, predictable debates but what they miss is

what's new and so vital about this decentralized, mostly leaderless movement that has captured the world's imagination.

Judging by the media attention it has received and polls that show large numbers of supportive Americans, it is touching a global nerve and changing the national, even international conversation. It seems to be doing a lot that's right!

Not only have they survived mass arrests and continuing harassment, they showed they could brave what Mother Nature threw their way. They are in the best tradition of the post office which still projects this creed despite the specter of cutbacks: "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds"

Occupy's "couriers" have self-appointed rounds in self-managed occupations run by work groups and guided by participation in a daily General Assembly where activists listen to each other and disagree without being disagreeable.

They have raised a war chest of several hundred thousand dollars. They keep their sites clean with their own sanitation department. In New York, they feed their own with their own kitchen that also serves homeless people in the neighborhood. They even have their own "people's library."

In many ways, they are creating ways of cooperative living that they want society to be like. The key to it all is commitment and engagement on the individual level. This way of fusing pragmatism and idealism is what makes it so impressive.

Movements that function from the top-down are more controlled but not necessarily more effective.

At this point, the Occupy movements is still growing, and still spreading its aura more than its message. When you think of how many unemployed people there are and how many others are coping with foreclosures or student debt you can see its potential for organizing and outreach.

Already activists in Oakland, where attacks by police from 19 different jurisdictions have galvanized a mass reaction, are calling for a Nov. 2 "general strike." Are they well organized enough to pull this off and to shut down a whole city?

This may be a case of overreaching in reaction to a brutal police action. But, bear in mind that since the attack occurred, no one is cheering. The city's mayor says she now supports Occupy. The police are now supposedly investigating their own conduct, and the occupiers are back in the plaza they were forced to

abandon.

Police attacks often boomerang with the public siding with citizens, not cops. There is a lot to be optimistic about.

Slavoj Žižek writes in *In These Times*, “The Western Left has come full circle: After abandoning the so-called ‘class struggle essentialism’ for the plurality of anti-racist, feminist, gay rights etc., struggles, ‘capitalism’ is now re-emerging as the name of THE problem.”

Let’s put the emphasis on words like “emerging” and “awakening,” Politics is always a process. Give people time to distinguish their friends from their enemies. Let’s trust the wisdom of the people. They seem to “get it” much more than the media or the pols.

It is significant that there has been talk of a national convention in Philadelphia on July Fourth next year. Right now, as for a definitive agenda, action always speaks louder than words.

News Dissector Danny Schechter writes the daily newsdissector.com blog. He directed the film *Plunder* about the financial crisis as a crime story. (Plundthecrimeofourtime.com) Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org

‘In Time,’ a Film for the 99%

Many Americans are accustomed to the top one percent on the economic pyramid getting the bulk of the benefits from society’s work and investments, as if that’s the natural order of things. But a new movie “In Time” presents a similar dilemma in a parallel reality, writes Lisa Pease.

By Lisa Pease

New Regency Pictures must be thrilled at the fortuitous timing of the launch of their new film “In Time.” The science fiction thriller revolves around a world in which time is the ultimate currency and most people can’t get enough of it.

The world is divided into time zones, most of them poor, except for the zone of

New Greenwich, where the richest 1 percent live.



The premise of the world of the film is this: All people stop aging genetically once they hit 25. They have to earn every minute over 25. If they run out of time, they die. And to earn time is difficult for the 99 percent. Caught in low-level jobs or, in some cases, resorting to crime, the scrappy ghetto inhabitants who populate the world of the film make difficult choices about what to do with the time they collect.

The story is propelled by Will Salas, played with appropriate action hero intensity by Justin Timberlake. Will is given a gift of time at the start of the film with an admonishment not to waste it by a man who has already lived more than 100 years. He shares information with Will that sends Will on a quest to see how the 1 percent live.

When Will's donor dies, the "timekeepers" – the police in this society – believe Will killed him to steal his time, a common occurrence among the 99 percent. As Will crosses into New Greenwich, he is pursued by one Timekeeper in particular who refuses to quit, playing Javert to Timberlake's Valjean.

In New Greenwich, Will meets one of the wealthiest men in the world, Philippe Weis, played (in a brilliant piece of casting) by Vincent Kartheiser, the rich young prick of *Mad Men*. Weis possesses untold millions of years of time, but he is poor in other areas that really matter.

Will befriends Philippe's caged bird of a daughter Sylvia (Amanda Seyfried), who longs for adventure and to be free of the bodyguards who protect her from others who would steal her time.

Together they set off on an adventure that may cost them all the time they have left, a risk both are eventually willing to take, because society is broken, and

they think they have a chance to fix it. They don't know if their plan will work. But they know they have to try.

This isn't a character study. This isn't an emotional drama. But it is a fascinating, fast-paced ride through a parallel reality that is fun, interesting, and strangely heartening.

As winter storms threaten to put a chill on the Occupy Wall Street group and its compatriots in other cities, this film has the potential to send flurries of new protesters into their camps. The film presents a compelling – if obvious – parable about what happens when some keep all the bounty for themselves and force the rest to support the excessive lifestyle choices of the few.

It's unfair. It's not right. And it must be changed. But change is never easy and requires the sacrifices of many.

As I left the theater, I felt like I was still in the movie. I was at The Grove, a fancy village-like mall in Los Angeles where the 1 percent shop.

Outside the theater, a Christmas tree was being rebuilt. Branches from a stately forest veteran that had been sheared off a couple of days ago were now being groomed and reattached, propped up by blocks of additional wood, because nature's own creation evidently isn't good enough for the 1 percent.

Near the tree sat diners eating \$50 steaks and drinking \$100 bottles of wine. I passed \$990 Prada pumps en route to my humble abode in a much lower rent district nearby. I put my worn-out shoes in the closet, opened the refrigerator and pulled out a bag of fading carrots.

But I'm not complaining. I'm grateful. I have time. And I have the keen realization that it is – by far – my most precious possession.

Lisa Pease is a writer who has examined issues ranging from the Kennedy assassination to voting irregularities in recent U.S. elections.

Why OWS Has Already Prevailed

With a few exceptions, the initial reception of the "Occupy" movement across America was fairly benign. But authorities in Oakland and elsewhere are now turning aggressive, sending in police to shut down encampments and disperse protesters, as Phil Rockstroh observes.

By Phil Rockstroh

Until recent events proved otherwise, the hyper-commercialized surface of the corporate state gave the appearance of being too diffuse – too devoid of a center to pose a threat of totalitarian excess.

Accordingly, as of late, due to the violent response to OWS protesters by local police departments in Oakland, Atlanta, Chicago, and in other U.S. cities, the repressive nature of the faux republic is beginning to be revealed.

Behind the bland face of the political establishment (purchased by the bloated profits of the plundering class) are riot cops, outfitted and armed with the accoutrements of oppression, who are ready and willing to enforce the dictates of the elitist beneficiaries of the degraded status quo.

In deed and action, as of late, the police state embedded within neo-liberal economic oligarchy is showing its hyper-authoritarian proclivities to the world.

In general, existence within the present societal structure inflicts on the individual a sense of atomization and its concomitant feelings of alienation, vague unease, free floating anxiety and anomie. The coercion is implicit and internalized.

Because of its mundane, ubiquitous nature, the system is reliant on an individual's sense of isolation (even ignorance of the existence of the structure itself) to remain in place. In short, the exploitive system continues to exist because its denizens are bereft of other models of comparison.

The public commons inherent in the OWS movement provides a model of comparison. Apropos, that is why we are beginning to receive reports such as the following:

On Tuesday Oct. 25, the Oakland Tribune reported that police raided and demolished the local OWS encampment after declaring the area a "crime scene."

This is revelatory regarding the character of the enforcers of the present order: Those in positions of power within a police state view freedom of assembly and freedom of expression as a punishable offense.

It is a given that: Authoritarian personality types take particular umbrage when citizens are expressing their displeasure with official abuses of power and begin to do so in an effective manner.

Too many in the U.S. have bought the fiction that the nation was, is and will remain a democratic republic. Therefore, by drawing its brutal operatives and mendacious apologist into the open, the state will reveal itself in all its ugliness.

As a result, all concerned will be able to observe the true nature of the police/national security/oligarchic state in place in the U.S. Ideally, few illusions will remain intact regarding the ruthless, brutal forces against which we struggle.

Moreover, the actions of the police in regard to public protest are premeditated tactics aimed at the suppression of the right to public assembly. The goal of the power brokers, their political operatives and police enforcers is to render one's (allegedly) constitutionally guaranteed right to dissent too prohibitive to be practiced.

The economically dispossessed and members of minority communities have known for many years what OWSers are suffering, presently, at the hands of official power and its enforcers.

In turn, individual police officers are well aware of whom they are sworn to protect (and it isn't those who desire to exercise their rights to free assembly and free speech).

In most cases, if an individual police officer ever refused an order to make an unconstitutional arrest, he/she would be committing an act of careericide; their chance of advancement within the department would have to be scraped off the sidewalk on the spot and transported to the city morgue.

Are you willing to leave the confines of your comfort zone and go to jail for justice?

Rarely, does reform arrive without the arrest of frontline agitators. Power does not yield without a fight, without attempting to silence dissent by brutality and forced detention. The powerful demand that those of us who notice their excesses and crimes be placed out of sight and out of mind.

Hence, in Oakland, the local corporate news affiliates, to their shame, turned off their cameras when the violent attacks and mass arrest of protesters began.

Are you willing to risk injury to body and reputation to bear witness? The survival of the OWS movement depends on having bodies on the ground and eyes (as well as cameras) on the thugs in uniform.

True to form, a servile corporate media will proclaim how unsightly dissenters are, inferring that sensible folk, simply as a matter of good taste and public propriety should disregard the protesters' entreaties and that these malcontents and cranks should be denied entrance into the realm of legitimate discourse, that these disheveled interlopers be barred by walls of silence.

To be in the world is to be confronted with walls. How we respond to these barriers is called character and art. Many brave souls have confronted walls such as these.

Often, as I gaze upon the blue wall of mindless repression surrounding Zuccotti Park and reflect on other OWS sites nationwide, I am induced to feel the sadness and longing of the repressed souls of the earth, of those throughout time who have met walls of blind hatred, of economic exploitation, of institutional repression.

I empathize with all of those who faced walls of smug indifference, walls of internalized shame and walls of official lies – those who stood powerless before the stark reality of seemingly implacable circumstances.

I reflect upon the lives and work of itinerate blues musicians of the U.S. Deep South and the manner they met walls of both official repression and collective blind, ignorant fear and hatred, and how they transformed those prison walls into the numinous architecture of The Blues. How they alchemicalized the barriers into guitar technique.

Musical instruments, like word meeting meter to a poet, serve as both barrier and salvation; the limits of the self are tested, explored, and by effort, failure and moments of elation are transformed by confrontation and union with the instrument, personal circumstance and audience.

As is the case with those on the front lines of OWS encampments, millions of people throughout history have met seemingly implacable barriers in the form of walls of human brutality e.g., Jim Crow laws, union busting management goon squads, the Zionist apartheid wall, various secret police and public bullies – but they weren't going to let the bastards "turn them 'round"

If you choose to resist entrenched power, when confronted by mindless authority, your heart will know the drill; it will guide you – its natural trajectory is towards freedom. Hence, you will know what to do when the moment arrives – and will gain the knowledge that your predecessors discovered in their struggle for justice that the cry arose forth from deep in their souls, "We shall not be moved."

The practitioners of the Delta Blues came upon walls of oppression walls of raging hatred, and responded by passing through those walls to inhabit a landscape more alive, more resonant, more ensouled than their oppressors will ever know possible.

They occupied their own hearts and draw us still into the immediacy of the world by their victory over their degraded circumstances by their appropriating the

very barriers that were placed in their path by their oppressors and transforming the criteria of their oppression into the living architecture of the soul.

Those who know this – have already won have already overcome.

Lorca limned the situation (one extant as well in the enfolding OWS movement) in his theory of “the duende.” His concept of the duende reveals why people, when faced by the ossified order of an inhuman system, either become caught up – even compelled – by the challenge to begin to make the world anew – while others are seized with mortification, indifference, resignation and hostility.

In which direction does your soul wend?

“The arrival of the duende always presupposes a transformation on every plane. It produces a feeling of totally unedited freshness. It bears the quality of a newly created rose, of a miracle that produces an almost religious enthusiasm.”
– from The Havana Lectures, Federico Garcia Lorca.

When I witness police harassing, arresting and brutalizing those exercising their rights to free assembly, I find myself gripped by a surge of rage. The rage rises in me in an animalistic fury – an urge to fight tooth and nail, to tear at the throats of these vicious intruders into the territory of authentic social discourse.

As of late, instead of pushing down the fury rising from within me or acting upon it, I let it inundate my being. As a result, the coursing rage transforms into a penetrating, powerful force – enveloping and demarcating the geography of my convictions arriving to bring acceptance and to define and defend the contours of my true self.

Rage can appear as an angel of self-definition, the protector of one’s authentic nature and a source of personal power “ain’t gonna let nobody turn me around, turn me ’round ”

One’s anger is vital to one’s existence; it is a valuable gift; therefore, it should not be squandered no need to waste it on fools and idiots.

When rage arrives, invite him in; his presence will fill the room with alacrity, and his surging vitality will allow you to push farther and deeper into the unexplored regions of your soul.

In contrast, the world of the neoliberal oligarchs, the duopolistic political class and of the cops has been called into question. They have grown accustomed to having their way, of having a compliant and complicit peasantry.

In this they are not unique; what they are experiencing is universal: The world we know (or at least believe we do) and struggle to maintain, from time to time, is apt to reveal an aspect of itself that seems alien and unmanageable e.g., the growing dissent across the nation, perhaps too vast and potent to be kettled, penned, tear gassed, cuffed and detained.

The otherness of the world seems too large has become an army of aggrieved angels.

I once saw a Great Dane on Second Avenue attempt to engage in canine communion with his fellows. In order to display his intentions were benign, friendly, he crouched down on the sidewalk, making his massive frame as small as possible, even placing his large head on the concrete doing all he could to produce the artifice of submission, to even the smallest dog that approached him.

In other words, to enlarge his world he created the illusion of smallness. He did not reduce his essence; he created the artifice of smallness so he could grow larger than himself by his union with the otherness of the world.

We are not requesting that cops crouch before us. They just need not bristle so. To grow in each other's presence, we are required to meet the other at eye level, even if one has to descend a bit from a habitual position of power and authority.

Officers, your guns, rubber bullets, nightsticks, pepper spray – the looming wall of blue intimidation that you brandish merely creates the illusion of strength. If you truly want to grow strong, meet us on these sidewalks, sans the display of empty power.

Phil Rockstroh is a poet, lyricist and philosopher bard living in New York City. He may be contacted at: phil@philrockstroh.com. Visit Phil's website:

<http://philrockstroh.com/> or at FaceBook:

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100000711907499>

'Occupy' Protests Grow in Philadelphia

As the "Occupy" movement spreads to scores of American cities, some encampments are encountering challenges, from sanitation woes to chilly weather to hostility from local authorities. But the occupation in Philadelphia appears determined to persevere, as photo-journalist Ted Lieberman reports.

By Ted Lieberman

Now three weeks old, the occupation outside Philadelphia's City Hall is going strong. The rows of tents have grown longer, the donations are pouring in, and the demonstrators have a relatively good relationship with the police and the city administration so far.

Despite the cooling weather and a few days of drizzling rain, morale is high. And while everyone else tries to figure out what it means, the protesters of Occupy Philadelphia seem to be ready for an indefinite stay.

On Oct. 4, some 1,000 Philadelphians met at a local church and voted to occupy City Hall, angered by the unfairness of current economic policy, and inspired by the ongoing demonstrations on Wall Street.

Two days later, at 9 a.m., demonstrators converged on Dilworth Plaza, the west side of Philadelphia's ornate City Hall. By 10 o'clock, there were several hundred demonstrators. They set about establishing their turf with a giddy spirit, observed by dozens of reporters, photographers, and video teams.

An estimated 50 to 100 slept in the Plaza on the first night. By the second night, there were more than 50 tents, with many other demonstrators sleeping under the stars. By Day 7, there were 148 residential tents, including big ones capable of housing three to eight people. By Day 16, there were 227 residential tents, plus another 20 or so tents storing food and medical supplies, media, and a library.

Having spent a couple hours or so most days at the occupation since the beginning, I can offer some observations that may or may not run counter to some of the pundit presumptions:

—There is no one political line or one official set of demands for the group. The most commonly heard political idea is taken from New York that the wealth and power in the country is largely controlled by a small elite.

"We are the 99 percent!" is commonly heard as demonstrators dance across the big intersection at Market and 15th Streets during red lights, prompting drivers to honk their horns in support. Many do.

Beyond that, it's hard to generalize about the protesters. Some are students, but many have jobs ranging from teachers, scientists and software marketers to pizza servers. Some are middle-aged or retired. A significant number are African-American.

—They are not politically predictable. They are not creatures of traditional

political groups, either the Old Left, the New Left, the labor unions, and certainly not the Democratic Party. They bring a variety of political and social beliefs to the project.

Don't be fooled by outlier signs; while some outside groups want to influence the political orientation of the occupation, the Occupy protesters are decidedly independent and free-thinking.

Although many of the demonstrators referred to themselves as non-ideological and non- and anti-authoritarian, they have a surprisingly good instinct for organization and self-discipline.

Organizers quickly established committees to run security, first aid, education and media outreach, and to receive donations. They established a lending library and a free book table. They set up a tent with a wireless connection and a charging station.

—They are not a clone of New York. While the Philadelphia protesters draw inspiration from Occupy Wall Street, they also follow their own path on organizing their activities.

Unlike New York, organizers in Philadelphia have successfully maintained good relations with the City, even receiving two friendly visits from the mayor. The organizers generally cooperate with the police, consulting them frequently and following police instructions when they leave the Plaza to march (as they generally do at least once a day).

When some outsiders denounced the protesters over their friendly relations with the police, organizers and protesters responded promptly to defuse any provocation and to maintain their nonviolent tactics.

Members of the police Civil Affairs team have privately spoken approvingly of the demonstrators and their commitment to peaceful activities, even in the face of provocation.

"I'm glad they didn't fall for that other stuff," said one longtime police veteran during the first week. Another proclaimed them the best group of protesters he's worked with in a long time. He even approved of their message:

"I mean, pretty soon, five individuals are going to own the whole world. That's not going to be good."

—They are mindful of the need for more definition. Many of the questions about the movement seem to focus on the endgame: what is your specific objective? How long will you stay out here? What is victory?

There are no answers common to the group as a whole. They are a heterogeneous group with potentially very different ideas about what a victory would look like and how to parlay their strengths into achieving it, either in the short-term or long-term.

But they are working on it. A special committee is aggressively canvassing all of the occupiers about what the goals and message of their movement should be. There appears to be a shared sense that coalescing around a unified message is desirable but has to happen within the experience of the occupation itself.

In the meantime, the protesters exhibit a passion for social justice and a fairer distribution of the country's wealth and power. They are not stupid: they understand greed, vacillation, and empty promises when they see them. They seem to practice what they preach, running the encampment openly and with respect for all the participants.

—Contrary to a right-wing attack line that the protesters are anti-Semitic the opposite appears to be true. On Friday night, Oct. 7, more than 100 protesters and supporters attended a *Kol Nidre* service in the well of the Plaza to welcome Yom Kippur. Seven facilitators wearing *tallits* chanted the service in Hebrew and sang the ancient songs of repentance and redemption.

I remembered that just three weeks before that, I had observed Friday night Sabbath services at both the Nordau Avenue and Habima Square tent city encampments in Tel Aviv, photographing the occupiers singing the traditional *Kiddush*.

Surprisingly, virtually no one at the Philadelphia protests had heard of the tent city protests in Tel Aviv and other Israeli cities that lasted months and brought out as many as 400,000 demonstrators for social justice in Tel Aviv in September.

—Difficult decisions lie ahead. On Sunday, Oct. 23, a small contingent decided to march to the police administration building, where a number of them sat in the street and refused to leave despite the usual police warnings to leave. Fifteen were peacefully arrested and released from jail early Monday morning.

Some members of the safety committee applauded this action and thought it was appropriate. A police official, however, saw it as a bad sign; that agitators with their own agenda were set to whip up the crowd and engage in ever-more extreme conduct.

As the cold weather and the boredom of sitting on concrete all day sets in, it will be a test for the occupation to retain cohesion and their focus on appealing to the population on the broader issue of economic justice.

The Philadelphia protesters are a long way from redemption, but their spirit and determination serve as a reminder that the path to something better sometimes ends in Washington but seldom starts there. As one sign in Dilworth Plaza put it, "The Beginning Is Near."

Ted Lieverman is a free-lance photographer in Philadelphia.

Toward a Non-Violent Revolution

Like the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street, the French Revolution began as a rejection of an unjust system where the few were obscenely rich and the many had little money or power. Where it went off-track was in its embrace of violence, a lesson today's revolutionaries must heed, says Gary G. Kohls.

By Gary G. Kohls

I was reading a book about Adolf Hitler, entitled *The Psychopathic God*, when I ran across a meaningful quote from a French Revolution-era author, diplomat and orator named Honore Mirabeau, describing his visit to the kingdom of Prussia.

Mirabeau wrote: "Prussia is not a country that has an Army; it is an Army that has a country." That quote piqued my interest so I did some research into the realities in which Mirabeau found himself.

My initial thought was to write column about Prussian militarism and the alarming similarities to our own but instead decided to write about the French Revolution, particularly with the early phases of the current revolution going on around the world in the Occupy Wall Street and Arab Spring Uprising movements. There are many lessons to be learned.

Honore Mirabeau was one of the few voices of moderation and compromise during the early phases of the eventual mass slaughter that characterized the tragic French Revolution, which, if we will try to recall our inadequate high school world history books, we should remember began in 1789.

The French Revolution was partially inspired by the American Revolution which occurred a few years earlier. Both revolutions shook the complacent world of European kings and queens, not to mention dictators and assorted autocrats all around the world.

Honore Mirabeau was one of the political leaders in the early stages of the revolt in Paris, a time when nobody had yet decided what to do with the king and

the kingdom. Mirabeau and his wise counsel died too soon – in 1791, before the Terror began – of either poisoning or heart complications from his previously diagnosed pericarditis.

Storming of the Bastille

The French Revolution was a mass movement against the tyranny and oppression of the monarchy and all the oppressive economic, police state and the politically and socially unjust structures that go with that reality.

Mirabeau earnestly searched for, in that polarized time in French history, some sort of non-violent compromise between the doomed members of the parasitic, predatory, aristocratic ruling classes (including King Louis XVI and his influential queen Marie Antoinette) and the many political factions that were jockeying for position in the power vacuum that followed the start of the revolution with the symbolic storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789.

The Bastille was an infamous prison that was the hated symbol of all that was oppressive about the militarily-enforced, economically-oppressive, totalitarian regime of Louis XVI.

One could easily compare the Bastille to the seats of dictatorial power in the various Arab Spring nations or to Wall Street in 2011. All were logical symbolic targets of a long-suffering, enraged and increasingly hopeless people who had little to no say in the national political process and didn't trust those in positions of authority.

All were obvious targets of those who had endured taxation without representation and who were victims of job insecurity, indebtedness from predatory lenders, arbitrary arrests, extra-judicial imprisonments and executions. All were definitely symbols of corporate exploitation, police harassment and harsh or unfair punishment for crimes.

Unfortunately, however, it was undisciplined mob violence that kick-started the French Revolution, which eventually turned into anarchy and civil war and the predictable retaliatory responses of various power factions, often using hired thugs and paid mercenary soldiers to commit serial atrocities against one another.

Violence and the desire for revenge are very human (but not very spiritual) responses to oppression. They were especially understandable then because the gap between the rich and the poor was vast and widening. The 99 percent who lived at the poverty level were constantly food-and-job insecure, with no access to affordable health care, the growing of their own food or being paid a livable wage.

The infamous pamphleteer (and eventually one of the doomed dictators) Jean-Paul Marat was an angry, pro-violent idealist who was also a single-minded power-seeker. When he eventually attained absolute political power, he became a psychopathic mass murderer.

In one of his early pamphlets (1789), Marat wrote: "Rise up, you unfortunates of the city, workmen without work, street stragglers sleeping under bridges, prowlers along the highways, beggars without food or shelter, vagabonds, cripples and tramps cut the thumbs off the aristocrats who conspire against you; split the tongues of the priests who have preached servitude."

Marat's quote reminds me of a phrase I once heard: "The French Revolution will be complete when the last priest is strangled with the guts of the last lawyer." I don't recall exactly where I heard that one, but I hasten to add that I don't agree with it. I do, however, understand where the sentiment came from.

'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity or Death'

Most of us who espouse the courageous, active nonviolent resistance to oppression of the type taught by Jesus, Gandhi and King will resonate with the first part of Marat's quote but will be appalled by the last part.

The quote points out very nicely, however, what was one of the grave mistakes of the French Revolution, and that was the willingness to use homicidal violence to attain the goals of the famous motto of the revolution: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity."

(Actually the original motto was "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity or Death" but the "Death" part was judiciously dropped with the September Massacres, the Parisian Terror, the civil war and the mass beheadings the latter thanks to the "humane" invention of French physician Dr. J. I. Guillotin).

Marat's apparent solidarity with the victims of an oppressive system was actually an incitement to mob violence and the overthrow of the existing system by those long-suffering people who genuinely yearned to be free.

Marat understandably miscalculated when he led the revolution in a violent direction. He had it wrong but, despite France being a Christian nation (Roman Catholicism was the state religion), few or none, even among the clergy in that era, understood the practicality or ethics of the nonviolence of Jesus.

Britain's Lord Acton was similarly appalled when he wrote about the disastrous end results of the French Revolution. He authored the insightful and very truthful dictum that says: "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." And that dictum applies to economic power, political power,

military power, police power, sexual power, racial power, but not the power of love.

The French commoners knew all about crushing poverty, but they, like Marat, also knew who were the exploiters, the predators and the undeserving, over-privileged ones who were their overlords. They were the easily identifiable ones who were living a life of excess luxury wealth, living off the blood, sweat and tears of those just struggling to survive.

There were a number of well-fed elites in France who were living parasitically off the labor of the masses and the good graces of the royalty, whose money came from fees and taxes that were disproportionately assessed on the lower classes and often not paid at all by the wealthy.

The moneyed classes did a lot of partying, financial speculating and theatre-going and had no visible means of support other than their connections to the crown. They spent a lot of their leisure time counting their money, flaunting their wealth, managing their estates, drinking spirits, philandering and otherwise enjoying their leisure time.

Even institutions like the wealthy and powerful Catholic Church and its bishops were generally despised by the masses, as the Marat quote makes clear.

The less-than-useless aristocracy, the hereditary nobility and the wealthy landowners were equally hated, as were the greedy bankers and the investor classes that were always creating economic bubbles that eventually burst, usually hurting the innocent.

Other over-privileged groups who were dependent on the good graces of the king included the legal profession (lawyers and judges) and the King's military, security forces and police establishments. They were the ones who enforced unjust laws and kept the impoverished, hopeless, starving and increasingly restless people under control.

The poor were derogatorily referred to as *sans culottes* (literally "without breeches") and they feared the jackboot on their necks, the police baton on their skulls and the "knock on the door at midnight".

But they were eager to rise up against the repression and demand their rights, articulated so beautifully in the 1789 "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen," a precursor to the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on Dec. 10, 1948.

Active Nonviolence

There are numerous lessons to be learned from revolutions of the past, but the most important one for our revolutionary time is already being understood and implemented; and that is the truth that courageous, active, nonviolent revolutions in the mode of Jesus, Gandhi and King are the ones that the powerful and the violent find most difficult to overcome.

The *agents provocateur*, infiltrators and the armed mercenary thugs that are sent by corporations or the government to disrupt nonviolent demonstrations are signs of desperation among the ruling elite.

These enforcers of the establishment (that desperately wants the gravy train to keep on running smoothly) want to avoid criminal indictments or jail time. They prefer to be confronted by violent resistance, since they know how to deal with violence.

They can open fire, claiming that the protestors drew "first blood". They have all the new-fangled, high-tech weapons and tactics to "mow down" or "disappear" protestors.

But the corporate and government enforcers are confused and uncertain as to how to deal with nonviolent direct action, especially when it is strengthened by the new media (the cell phone, FaceBook, Twitter and internet era).

Then, they may not dare to use the classic police state fascism methods of crowd control. And they know that they do not have the capacity or the resources to arrest everybody or imprison everybody. Leaderless mass movements can't be decapitated or disappeared.

What the world needs now, and what the Occupy Wall Street and Arab Spring Uprising movements are wisely providing, is not a movement led by a single major prophet that can be easily silenced by assassination or arrested. Such movements are easily stopped (a la Jesus, Gandhi, MLK, Wellstone).

What the world is seeing and applauding today are movements led by a million minor prophets that are too numerous to deal with by violent police repression.

Vive la revolution!

Note: for an excellent YouTube video about the French Revolution, from British comedian, Mark Steel, check out:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHsdGdrAPWw&feature=related>

Dr. Gary G. Kohls is a retired physician who practiced holistic mental health care, dealing extensively with the totally preventable and difficult to treat reality known as posttraumatic stress disorder, which is always a consequence of

violence. He is a member of the Community of the Third Way (a local Every Church A Peace Church affiliate) and the Just Peace Committee of Peace Church UCC in Duluth, Minnesota.

The MSM's Fear of OWS

Journalism should be about the new and unexpected, but most journalists really prefer the routine and expected, so their days go easier. And they shy away from questioning the status quo. All of which makes Occupy Wall Street (OWS) a nuisance to the mainstream media (MSM), says Danny Schechter.

By Danny Schechter

The other night, I ran into a veteran journalist, a writer who I always considered was among the “plugged in.” Yet when I told him I was reporting on Occupy Wall Street, he plugged out, and stared at me cluelessly.

“What do they want,” he asked, echoing the questioned raised endlessly by TV pundits and editorial commentators. He didn't seem to know or care who “they” are, or why they have taken to living in parks to make their point.



He and his colleagues seem to be saying that to understand what's going on, it must all be first compressed into a press release with bullet points they can simplify further.

“I don't get it,” he sighed.

“It's about Occupying Wall Street,” I replied, “Occupying Wall Street, challenging the power of its economic power.”

Another blank look. It's as if we need our politics to follow a predictable format characterized by legislators playing to the cameras, message points, and

pithy slogans.

The idea of a deeper challenge to a totally compromised system driven by big money and special interests is considered by some as anomaly that belongs in another century.

Extra-parliamentary political movements don't compute for some who want the political debate limited to rituals like elections, traditional "debates" and up-and-down votes on selective laws. In this world, politics is best left to politicians with citizens there to look but not to act.

There seems to be three factors at work.

-Financial issues are treated as exotic, beyond our comprehension and best left in the back of the paper in the business pages where obscurantist language makes it so dense that most readers turn away.

-The upper classes, now referred to as "the 1percent," and the people who identify with them uncritically or rely on them for financial guidance cannot comprehend any critique that challenges their prerogatives and power. They use terms like "unsophisticated" to deligitimize protesters who challenge their pretensions and priorities.

-Some of these defenders of privilege don't and won't "get it" because it is not in their interest to do so. They shamelessly use their power to impose their will on the legislative process with an eye on loosening or abandoning any financial reforms that force higher standards of transparency.

Example: even as Occupy Wall Street wins public support for its campaign exposing inequality and challenging the big banks and corporations, the Obama Administration is about to weaken mining laws that seek to insure corporate accountability.

Matt Taibbi explains the latest way Washington is aligned with Wall Street in Rolling Stone: (Amazing isn't it that a music magazine does a better job of covering these issues than our financial media,)

He writes, "Barack Obama is apparently **expressing willingness to junk big chunks of Sarbanes-Oxley in exchange for support for his jobs program**. Business leaders are balking at creating new jobs unless Obama makes compliance with S-O voluntary for all firms valued at under \$1 billion.

"Here's how to translate this move: companies are saying they can't attract investment unless they can hide their financials from investors. So the CEOs and gazillionaires on Obama's Jobs Council want the politically-vulnerable president

to give them license to cook the books in exchange for support for his jobs program. From the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette:

“‘All you’re going to do is have more fraud. The ultimate losers are going to be investors,’ said Jeff Klink, a former federal prosecutor whose Gateway Center firm helps clients prevent and detect fraud.’”

Unfortunately, the Occupy Wall Street activists have, like the rest of the country, not been widely exposed to the considerable documentation around massive fraud by the financial industry.

When William Black, former bank regulator and the country’s leading critic of corporate fraud now at the University of Missouri Law School in Kansas City visited Occupy Wall Street on Oct. 25, he was not recognized by most of those in the encampment or by many in the press who are also unfamiliar with the depth of the crimes of Wall Street.

Those crimes just don’t impact investors; they also hit ordinary Americans hard. They include the subprime mortgages as well as usurious credit cards. Black takes a systematic look at the problem.

He spoke at a teach-in at Occupy Wall Street on Tuesday evening to an attentive crowd. It was one of the first lectures about aspects of the financial crisis that many don’t really know about. It’s important to have more talks like this with critics taking the protesters to task about being “unsophisticated.”

More experts like Black will be speaking in the Park in the near future.

Perhaps that’s why Elizabeth Warren, the Harvard professor who proposed a consumer protection agency, is claiming she put forward the intellectual ideas that led to the Occupy Movement.

The Daily Beast’s Samuel P. Jacobs reports she created “much of the intellectual foundation” for the Occupy Wall Street movement. She also talks about her past life as a Republican and the challenges of being a woman on the campaign trail, and say she’s no “guileless Marxist.”

Ironically, that’s also true of many in Zuccotti Park who seem to favor anarchism, but at least they have a deeper critique of the posturing of both parties and seem to want far deeper reforms than those proposed by Warren.

Perhaps that’s why self-styled “liberals” like the Washington Post’s Richard Cohen can’t find an ounce of sympathy for protesters who are being skewered by the Israel lobby’s AIPAC as anti-Semitic based on an incident involving two people.

AIPAC has no comment on the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who have been protesting economic abuses in Israel Itself. To his credit, Cohen dismissed the hysterical anti-Semitism smears against Occupy Wall Street that have been amplified on Fox and other right-wing outlets.

But as FAIR notes Cohen goes on to piss on the protests. Here's FAIR's headline:

"Richard Cohen: OWS isn't Anti-Semitic – Just Clueless, Repugnant"

Here's how Cohen put it: "This right-wing attempt to discredit both the Occupy Wall Street movement and the Democratic Party's hesitant embrace of it is reprehensible. It's made possible, however, because no one this side of the Moon knows precisely what the Occupy Wall Street movement is trying to do.

"On a daily basis it marches off to some location to highlight what we all know that Wall Street guys are rich and their slogans suggest a tired socialism that is as repugnant to me as the felonious capitalism that produced the mortgage bubble and the impoverishment of millions of Americans."

I have hung out with Richard at the World Economic Forum in Davos in years past. It's the intellectual corporate playground of the 1 percent and I don't remember anything he wrote with this cranky and nasty tone about greedy CEOs who were getting rich off the poor and the middle-class.

It would be easy to denounce this hypocrisy, but it is worse because clearly the poobahs of the media lack the capacity to critique their own complicity in the media's failure to expose that "felonious capitalism" when it might have done some good.

They are threatened by a movement that is winning public support because it is also a repudiation of their own elite journalism in the service of the status quo.

News Dissector Danny Schechter blogs at newsdissector.com. His film *Plunder and book The Crime Of Our Time* investigate financial crime on Wall Street. (Plunderthecrimeofourtime.com. Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org.)

Selling Out the Tea Partiers

Tea Party leaders have joined Fox News in ridiculing Occupy Wall Street while calling for even less regulation of the banks and still lower taxes on the rich but Irving Wesley Hall is one Tea Partier who is questioning these "leaders" and

finding common ground with the anti-Wall Street protests.

By Irving Wesley Hall

I encourage my fellow Tea Partiers to reach out to their neighbors in Occupy Wall Street. We're on the same side.

Supporters of the Norwich and Otsego County Tea Parties [in central New York] will remember me. In 2009, we hit the streets together over shared outrage at the bipartisan \$800 billion taxpayer bailout of Wall Street. I presented the Memorial Day keynote address from the grandstand in Norwich's community park.

The following Independence Day I mounted the hay wagon in front of Losie's Gun Shop on Route 23 in Oneonta to address the Otsego Tea Party about taking back America. The Oneonta, New York, *Daily Star* published my speech as "What's Good for GM Is Now Good for China." As a member of the Southern Tier Tea Party in Binghamton I made a similar presentation in 2011.

My point was simple. The problem is not big federal government but Wall Street's financial stranglehold on our government.

I compared the power of the East India Company of Boston Tea Party fame to Goldman Sachs today, although the former at least profited from tea, while today's investment bankers profit primarily off other people's money.

In the cold winter of 1773 our patriots attacked the ships of the East India Company because, like Goldman Sachs today, it was a transnational monopoly that avoided taxes. How? King George III was a shareholder.

I described how – over the last 40 years – Wall Street destroyed America's industrial heartland, sent our jobs abroad, decimated unions, and flat-lined wages. Speculators relentlessly drove up prices for our food, housing, fuel and medical care.

Despite this cruel profiteering, folks in Central New York still believed in the American Dream. We worked hard, sacrificed and saved our dollars, but Wall Street stole our savings and pensions through the 401(k) scam.

We worked even harder but were forced to borrow and mortgage for our kids' educations, medical bills and, often, basic necessities. Then Wall Street ripped us off again with the subprime mortgage scam, credit card rip-offs and college loan racket.

They're sucking the life out of us, young, old and in-between.

I warned my fellow Tea Partiers that soon we elders would have nothing left but Social Security and Medicare. However, I could not have predicted in 2009 that “we” would “win” the 2010 election and Fox News would feature so-called “Tea Party” Republicans trying to help Wall Street scam Social Security and destroy Medicare, too.

Where did all our money go? The total aggregate wealth in the U.S. is around \$75 trillion. The top 1 percent own roughly 40 percent of that amount. The remaining 60 percent is shared unequally among the other 300 million of us.

Did you know that the average Bush-Obama tax cut for one of the richest 1 percent was greater than the average annual income of one of the remaining 99 percent? The nominal value of all Wall Street derivatives contracts is \$600 trillion.

Yet Fox’s callused “Tea Party” Republicans have the nerve to demand that we starve our elderly poor to rescue our desperate flood victims!

I warned my Tea Party neighbors in 2009 that Fox News was not a reliable source of information. Most of the corporate media represent the interests and views of Wall Street. Bank and corporate directorates are interlocked. But Fox pushed an extreme agenda on the Tea Party, tragically with success.

Within months of our first *non-partisan* protests Rupert Murdoch’s empire sucked our national Tea Party right into the Republican Party billionaires’ machine. Today Fox picks the six-figure- income national Tea Party “spokespeople” to defend Wall Street in our name. Nobody interviews us.

We may be advanced in years, but have we lost all memory?

Since the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations started on Sept. 17, some Tea Partiers have turned off Fox News and begun to consult other sources of information besides the corporate media. After all, didn’t the Tea Party *start* the protests against Wall Street?

But I regret to say that Fox still has a few of us folks convinced that black is white and white is black. How else can we explain how they convinced us in 2009 that Wall Street was out of control, but in 2011 they’ve convinced us that the toothless Dodd-Frank Wall Street regulations are a communist plot?

Unionized public workers were the heroes of 9/11. Now according to Fox’s millionaire talking heads they’re social parasites. Why should we dance to Fox’s tune? Owner Rupert Murdoch’s media empire is international. His values and lifestyle are repugnant to our hard-working families. His people have no loyalty to America.

Why do you think Fox attacks this generation of anti-Wall Street protesters? Why are their protests against Wall Street's control of Washington the exact opposite of ours? Because Murdoch is a master of divide and conquer. Patriotic Americans should reject his manipulation, turn off Fox News, and start thinking for themselves.

I've pleaded for two years with Tea Parties around the Southern Tier that the Tea Party is headed for bitter irrelevance after the next election. We can escape that fate only if we change from an old folks club addicted to Fox News and start recruiting young people on the basis of the Tea Party's three core principles: 1) fiscal responsibility; 2) limited constitutional government; and 3) the ideal of free markets.

Can anyone disagree that Wall Street is the greatest enemy of all three? Is supporting the banks with trillions of dollars of public funds while tens of millions of hard-working folks lose their jobs, homes and health insurance *fiscally responsible*?

Did you know that the CEO of Bank of America destroyed a half trillion dollars of his own shareholders' assets just to increase his yearly bonus?

The Founding Fathers would be aghast to see Wall Street lobbyists making the laws, billionaires choosing our candidates, and weapons profiteers driving the Republic into endless foreign wars.

Can you imagine George Washington weeping as hundreds of thousands of crippled vets return home to a jobless economy after fighting opponents of our military occupation who see *us* as their King George III?

Wall Street has not only destroyed American industrial might and millions of small investors but also wiped out hundreds of thousands of small businesses, the heart and soul of free market capitalism. I recall the heartbreak when my father's little hardware store was closed down after the arrival in town of Sears and Montgomery Ward.

A free people cannot live under a government that is owned by the top 1 percent. Not according to the three principles of the Tea Party. And, my Tea Party friends, that's exactly what Occupy Wall Street is saying.

Let's be honest with ourselves, fellow patriots, and this applies to the folks I've met in the Norwich, Otsego and the Southern Tier Tea Parties.

In two years of Tea Party meetings in three counties, I never met more than five souls under 40 years of age. Now millions of young people and folks of all ages have joined our cause. I'm jumping for joy. So should every veteran of our

groundbreaking Tea Party anti-Wall Street protests of 2009.

Occupy Wall Street protests are taking place in over 1,000 communities nationwide and 80 countries. Join them now and embrace your neighbors for taking up our banner.

I learned one thing since 2009. We Tea Partiers have plenty to contribute to Occupy Wall Street!

When I spoke to hundreds of Tea Partiers outside the gun shop two years ago, I counted hands. How many faced a bleak future because Wall Street stole their retirement savings and destroyed their home equity investment? Almost every hand went up.

How many could manage the cost of a catastrophic family medical emergency? One lonely hand.

We are part of the American 99 percent the young people are fighting for!

Now I know what you're thinking. Fox News tells us that Occupy Wall Street folks are a bunch of anti-American, fascist, communist, socialist, progressive, lazy, and violent would-be terrorists with poor toilet training. Worse – they don't know what they want!

Hello! This is the story broadcast by corporate media that lied us into Iraq, never tell the truth about the economy and that trivialize every election as a breathless horse race between two equally irrelevant clubs of windbags.

And they demand that we the 99 percent come up immediately with the answers to clean up the mess the media and the 1 percent created?

Fox's disinformation, fear-mongering, scape-goating, name-calling, personal attacks these tactics are the response of frightened rich people the 1 percent whose only hope to keep their ill-gotten gains is to dumb down enough of us 99 percent so badly that some will oppose their own families' interests.

Divide and conquer, that's what ruling minorities have done since Biblical times. Read the Gospels.

Fox's hate-mongering appeals only to the stubbornly deluded Americans among us. Sadly, it's the way the American elites and their supporters welcome every new generation of idealistic young people. That was how "patriotic conservatives" greeted our brave defense of the Constitution and Bill of Rights fifty years ago in San Francisco,

It's like the reaction of the emperor's courtiers and subjects when the kid

blurts out "The emperor has no clothes." That's why I feel compassion for my Tea Party neighbors who still buy into Wall Street's propaganda despite their own economic suffering.

Let's face it. Most Americans are emerging from a period of denial while the reality of another Great Depression sets in. We're like abused spouses who finally wake up and confront our abusers. The "left" got suckered by Obama in 2008; the "right" suckered by the Republicans in 2010. That's an interesting coincidence, isn't it?

Are we going to hold our noses and swallow a repeat performance next year?

All of us Left, Right and in-between have been hoodwinked. The American Empire is crumbling, exhausting its resources billions every day in ever-expanding quagmires hunting down shadowy "terrorists" and creating new enemies to justify the Pentagon's looting our treasury. Wall Street's globalized capitalism is destroying mother earth.

We confront an epic economic emergency, a shamelessly greedy and arrogant ruling class, and a hopelessly broken political system. The executive, legislative and judicial branches have all been corrupted by the rich 1 percent. Stunned Americans are falling into the hell of a Third World country.

And don't we know it! The polls reveal that we have lost hope and respect for the leaders of both parties. Obama's and Congress's approval ratings share rings in the toilet.

No one should be surprised that "Take Back America" picket signs are equally popular with the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street. Let's take it back *together* and *share* it.

Leaders failed us. All we have is each other. We are *all* the 99 percent!

Just suppose local Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street folks agreed on just three demands that we know are supported by the overwhelming majority of our neighbors? What if we presented them to all candidates for local, state and federal offices, and we refused to work or vote for them unless they agreed to implement the popular will *immediately* after taking office?

Odds are they'll all agree with us. Then we can work for whichever candidate represents our other values. Of course, after the election, success will depend on how well we work together, organize voters, hold joint demonstrations outside debates and Town Hall Meetings, and raise our combined voices inside too!

Together, we can let them know what we will do if they lie and betray us again!

Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street: Don't Fight! Unite!

Irving Wesley Hall is the author of the political satire, *The Einstein Sisters Bag the Flying Monkeys*, a hilarious primer on Christian Zionism along with Albert Einstein's great-great-granddaughters' passionate defense of one secular and democratic state for all Israeli and Palestinian people. He is also executive producer of the documentary, *Onward, Christian Zionists*. His web site, "We're Not in Kansas Anymore!" celebrates the 50th anniversary of the May 1960 San Francisco student protests against the McCarthyite House Committee on Un-American Activities, during which he was arrested. Visit www.notinkansas.us for details and his biography.

Common Cause Against Wall Street

During the Vietnam War, "hard-hat" construction workers would sometimes spit on or beat up young anti-war protesters. But the U.S. political/economic situation is now so dire that the "hard-hats" are finding common cause with the scruffy Wall Street protesters, notes Michael Winship.

By Michael Winship

Early last Friday morning, as the Occupy Wall Street protesters were just uncurling from their sleeping bags, I went downtown for a walkthrough of their campsite at Zuccotti Park, now also known as Liberty Plaza.

I met up there with AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka and New York City Central Labor Council President Vincent Alvarez. (I'm president of an AFL-CIO affiliated union.)

There were just a few of us in our group, and as the sun burned through the dawn's chill not much attention was paid as we took the tour. We kept our voices low and walked carefully, doing our best to keep from tripping over and waking those who were still asleep

One or two reporters hooked up with us, not including the kid you may have seen with the fake cardboard Fox News camera and microphone, who tossed out questions as he walked along behind us. That was the extent of the media coverage.

Every once in a while someone would ask who Trumka was and he would stop and chat. At the end of our visit, he sat with a group at the west end of the park, across from Ground Zero, and quietly offered encouragement, discussing strategy,

goals and on a practical level, the essentials needed to keep the protest going.

As many have noted, this so-called ragtag army of students and activists has ably taken democracy at its rawest and organized it well: the whiteboards filled with information, the computers mobilizing social media, the makeshift library of plastic bins filled with books and magazines, the committees that handle everything from “direct action” and training to hygiene and childcare.

As for their general assemblies, at which speeches and group decisions are made, many have made fun of the call-and-response “people’s mike” that sometimes makes them sound a bit like the chanting members of a cult.

But ask yourself if it’s no more peculiar than many of the words and deeds of those who currently constitute the United States Congress. Unlike the Bible’s lilies of the field, those honorable gentlemen and women toil not but spin like hell.

Consider the difference between an earnest and sincere gathering of committed men and women who for the most part only want to see our country pulled back from the abyss, and a Capitol Hill where legislators view the needs of a despairing nation as little more than moves in a punch drunk game of fantasy league football.

Oh, and I didn’t think the park “smelled like an open sewer,” as Rupert Murdoch’s *New York Post* reported this week (the city reports that not a single complaint has been made to its 311 helpline).

In fact, while I was there, the predominant aroma was that of hunger-inducing spices floating from the trucks of food vendors parked at the curbside. Neither was there any evidence of the blatant sex, drugs and public defecation the paper reported, but admittedly it was early and in any case I tend to usually miss out on that kind of thing.

In fact, there’s a lot of creativity and intelligence at work down there. Just read the movement’s snappily edited and written newspaper *The Occupied Wall Street Journal*, of course and take a look at some of their placards:

“If only the war on poverty was a real war. Then we would actually be putting money into it” (Cornel West was holding that one); “The police are one layoff away from joining us”; “You know things are messed up when librarians start marching.”

Are there miscreants among the crowd, hangers-on and even provocateurs? Sure. Speaking as an experienced veteran of demonstrations and picket lines, that’s been true since humankind first gathered together to express dissent. Lowlifes

always try to latch on.

Just the other day right-wing darling James O'Keefe, the puny scourge of ACORN and public radio, showed up in a business suit, tie and glasses, apparently hoping to provoke a protester into mistaking him for someone important and pummeling him with an empty pizza box.

Most hands extend in solidarity but there are always some who will close theirs to make a fist or an obscene gesture.

At the end of our visit, as Rich Trumka was leaving, a group of men from the United Steelworkers arrived from Jersey to take a look for themselves and offer support for the Occupy Wall Street movement.

Some wore hardhats and I remembered how, on May 8, 1970, after Nixon's invasion of Cambodia and the killing of four students by the National Guard at Kent State University, members of the building and trade unions, not very far from where we stood, beat up protesters much like the ones now camped out at Zuccotti Park.

As *The New York Times* legendary Homer Bigart reported back then, "Helmeted construction workers broke up a student anti-war demonstration in Wall Street yesterday, chasing youths through the canyons of the financial district in a wild noontime melee that left about 70 persons injured."

Kids were savagely kicked and pounded with tools, crowbars and yes, hardhats. More than four decades later, all that has changed.

The fate of our economy and our collective futures are so dire, unions have joined with the Occupy Wall Street activists. They have energized organized labor and the entire progressive movement, because these groups know that only with the strength of a unified voice putting truth to power can the plutocracy of government, industry and financial institutions be forced to budge even an inch from the avarice that values profit above people and domination over freedom.

I remembered, too, something I wrote a year and a half ago, recalling how much of the momentum of those 1970 antiwar protests and a national student strike vanished with the pleasures of summertime and dwindled – for a while at least – into something an editor friend dubbed "the Frisbee revolution."

I wrote, "Despite all the anger and worry today – an economy in shambles, the loss of jobs and security, wars continuing in Afghanistan and Iraq, a dysfunctional government hobbled by the stranglehold of campaign cash and political hackery – there's a similar lack of interest afflicting many of those who rallied to the cause of Barack Obama in 2008, knocking on doors,

contributing money voting.”

Occupy Wall Street prove me wrong. Please.

Michael Winship is senior writing fellow at Demos, president of the Writers Guild of America, East, and senior writer of the new series, “Moyers & Company,” premiering on public television in January 2012.
