

MIC CHECK

Documentary Shorts from the Occupy Movement

[Transcript]

NOBODY CAN PREDICT THE MOMENT OF REVOLUTION

I see corporatism, fascism, crony capitalism. I don't see a free market. I see a police state. I see an American empire. I see 700 military bases in 135 foreign countries. I see 5000 dead bodies in Iraq, a welfare-warfare state, which gives out billions of dollars in foreign aid for dictators to build up huge armies. I see an America that has lost its way. Republicrats: republicans and democrats who both pretty much stand for the same thing. I do not see true democracy. I do not hear the voice of the people. Finally we've risen up.

Spain, Egypt, you know, is the dynamics. Is the time right? You know, is it the right moment? Is the zeitgeist there? None of these things we can predict. We've seen what happens when people protest and come out and march around for a day. This is an opportunity for maybe a new style, a new shift in power, and the way people relate to each other, and like I say, I think we're fucked either way, but it's worth a shot.

I was waiting for this to happen. I knew it would happen because it happened in Europe, and I knew it would spread.

This is something that I've been going through internally for a good part of my life now, and to see it externalized in the outside world is really a blessing. It's really something that I enjoy being a part of.

I'm an old timer, so I've been around for four decades at one kind of activism or another. You know it's always been a hope to go after Wall Street and attack it without getting locked up and beaten up and physically beaten up, you know? How do we win?

It's a process of educating people and educating the world really that we have to be first and foremost altruistic and care for the collective before caring for ourselves. A model should be a growing movement of roundtable discussions basically.

"I was arrested, two days ago, interrogated, by police investigators, and intelligence, I encourage everyone, who was arrested, do not speak to these people, they intimidated me, said I would be chained to a wall, for a week, if I didn't talk, I didn't talk, I'm here right now."

The mayor of New York has a strange position to be in here. He can't go off looking like Mubarak or some other Middle Eastern leaders and treat protesters the same way they do, and he himself made a comment that if they don't find some jobs for kids they're going to have a problem like they had in Tunisia and Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries.

The only way that people like us, with no power and no money, can at least try to change things is through social pressure.

I don't know how to achieve collective liberation, in which we're all striving for, but I think it all needs to happen at the same time. We're here making a stand holding space.

To make people conscious because people are in their houses comfortable. As long as they have food or a house, they don't make the effort to demand their rights.

It's about time that people start standing up for a true democracy, so we can get rid of the corporate greed.

Demands are problematic and disempowering actually.

It's about people making things happen, rather than expecting someone else to take care. And you could see this as like a micro society.

It's a model for a new society. It's not a protest in the sense of being against something. It's a way to formulate something new.

A mass awareness, a mass realization and awakening of the masses to the obstruction of justice that has been a part of our lives for too long now, for too long of a time.

Even though we're so close together, especially in a city like this, and everybody's kind of scared to make that first step, to break through those walls that people put up, to make the connections necessary to build a community like this or different that talks about problems. And we all have common problems, common things that we can change to make our lives better.

I'm a sixty-year-old, Vietnam-era vet, who's been working irregular hours for a lawyer. And the lawyer himself is having financial problems himself, and he's getting ready to not have me work for him anymore. I'm in trouble. I don't know what the hell I'm going to do.

If you're frustrated, if you're like me, and you see the Tea Party on the television and in the news all the time, and you wonder why the hell isn't there a radical left answer to the Tea Party, you should be here. If you have a ton of student debt, like me, you should be here. If you're pissed off, and realize that, you know, you paid any taxes last year, you paid more taxes than General Electric the corporation, you should be here. If you want to see something amazing, period, you should be here.

CONSENSUS

People ask all the time, like, who are the leaders? Well, none of us are leaders and we're all leaders, exactly the same.

"Mic check, last week, we came, to a consensus, on the document, called the declaration, of the occupation, of New York City, our process, is direct democracy, we are all, part of this movement, we amplify each others voices, so we can hear one another, there is no, hierarchy."

I don't think that this is possible without the process. The only way that you keep people involved in a movement like this is you have a process in which everyone's voice can be heard. A consensus movement.

It's in our movement. It's really important to have our means reflect the ends that we're trying to create. We want to have more representation in our government and in our economy, so in trying to create that, every decision is made through our process of general assemblies and through our process of working groups.

If there is a decision that is given to you from a bishop or a president, your investment usually relies on how much you profit from it, you know. Here, everybody works together to come to a decision.

Because it's not top-down, it can take much more time, but in the end the decision being voted on it's so much stronger because everyone has worked out all of the little kinks to come up with the best thing that everyone can support together.

And that's the beauty of direct democracy is being able to say, "okay we need to come as a group so that everyone's on board with what's happening" because we leave one person out, that starts to jeopardize up the chain, leaving people out for the larger movement.

"Stack" is the order in which people speak, so if you have something to say, you get on Stack, and then eventually, what you have to say will be heard because you will be on a list that someone is very carefully keeping.

Right now, for this moment, I'm actually taking Stack. So basically, people raise their hands, I come up to them, and put them on Stack. I got here Wednesday. I was welcomed with open arms. I just went to Facilitation Training and now I'm taking Stack at GA. I want to actually facilitate a GA, but my voice is gone because I've been a human mic for the last four days straight.

All of this is overseen by a group that anyone can join called Facilitation, and they do trainings on how to be part of sharing this process in a way where it's un-opinionated, allowing all of the voices to be heard.

But you don't have to come here to be part of this. You can start it wherever you are, which is a great thing, and yeah, this is amazing. We have these hand signals, instead of clapping, or yays and nays, to avoid interruption.

When you want to show support to something that you're hearing, you twinkle.

Then there is, "I'm okay with it, but not really," and then "I disagree."

This, which is the point of process, when someone is getting off topic.

Louder means we can't hear you. Clarifying question.

If someone has a point of information, they'll throw up a finger.

This is the block.

If you make a block, it means you're so disagreeable to it that you will actually leave the movement or the working group if that's agreed upon. I actually stood up in front of the entire general assembly and did block a proposal that was going through. Blocks are a serious thing. You should probably only block something once or twice in your life. The Declaration of Occupy Wall Street was being discussed, so I was reading it over with my friends, who also happen to be South Asian, and we were like "this isn't something that we're going to be able to take back to our communities" and say "Hey come down here!" Because we know a lot of people who are going to feel alienated by this. And it was one of the scariest moments I've had because I was saying that in front of hundreds of people who are on, like, my side. But it was taken on. We changed the line to something that I think reads a lot more inclusively.

"Now we're going to move into, small breakout groups, fifteen minutes."

People come to a consensus meeting in the attitude that I want to make a decision that everyone is comfortable with. I want us to all agree on something.

Because I know what it's like when somebody honors my viewpoint when it comes from an unpopular place, I rejoice in the opportunity to honor somebody else's very different viewpoint. And there have been some decisions made that maybe I don't agree with, but because I was part of the process, because I saw how it was made, and I saw how good the intentions were, I honored the decision even if I didn't agree with it.

We're all good. No more concerns. Are there any more concerns? Okay, I just want everyone to know that its 5:06 right now. We have a lot more stuff to get through and for everyone to keep that in mind. Anybody else have anything to say?

It's messy, and it's complicated, and it's slow sometimes, but you have to be willing to take that on. It's in the nuance of things and in the deep hashing out of things where everyone feels represented and heard, which is the only way we can actually change a system, I think.

This is an entirely different way of thinking that is more inclusive, and it's working.

And I believe that even if we aren't at the right place now that using the process of consensus will bring us to the right place in the future.

"The process is meant, so you can be empowered, to go to your own communities, wherever you are, and hold general assemblies, to talk about, the issues, that concerns you, we're all in this together, occupy everything."

HOMEOWNERS SPEAK OUT

'95, we bought the house.

What was that like?

Buying houses was easier. Unfortunately, we got into this mess trying to do work on the house.

I moved into my house. Six months later, my landlord said he was selling the house. So at the time, we were able to buy the house, so we did.

My home, you can see it's not a grand mansion. It's not my vacation home. It's not my time-share. It's my single family in Queens Village.

The industry I was in was real estate and construction. That was one of the industries that was hit the hardest.

Safety nets in place, people should be able to get sick in this country and not worry about losing everything, but you know, Chase isn't caring about open-heart surgery. That's another 3 months of mortgage for them.

There are a lot of people who don't talk about it. They don't talk about the fact that they are in foreclosure, pre-foreclosure. They don't know what to do, and a lot of the homeowners, they leave, so there are a lot of abandoned homes, and that's hard because I understand what they're going through. You don't want to hear the harassing phone calls. You know they're not working with you, and you hear on the news how they're helping the homeowners, and you know that's not true.

I mean I know it's not your department, but... okay, and you said her name was Brooke? And you have her extension? 'Cause that's a new name for me.

I finally realize, this is a lot of games, so we started keeping perfect records of who I spoke to, what time I spoke to them, their fax number, I'm about to fax it, have you received it, and you know that's what I had to do just to keep the paperwork going. It's almost like they want you to be tired and just leave.

It's their collection. It's the department of Chase. But the collections department can't talk to the home preservation department.

So that anxiousness that I had, for me anyway, was turning more into "wait a minute, I called you for help, you said yes you're going to help, and now you're playing games." And I did tell a representative, listen you have a job, but this is my home. I have to have a roof for my children, and you're playing games.

My children, and we're greatly involved in their PTA. That's Jean Jr. and Cheyenne. You know, that 99% is not just a phrase. You know, when billionaires are telling people "just get a job and

stop whining," well if your not getting threatened with getting thrown in the street, you can afford to say that. But if you're looking at foreclosure notices, if you're looking at pink slips, then it's not whining.

The negative press wouldn't be after it, and that's one thing that I've learned with Occupy Wall Street. Because I know when we did the Day of Action on November 17th, there were thousands. You could not see the street. You couldn't see anything but people. You have the New York City mayor saying, "Oh, there's just a little bit of people." Are you kidding me? It was like wall-to-wall people. It wasn't cold because of the heat from everybody.

You know, if banks aren't going to take care of their property, keep the people in their home, open them up to... People need housing.

The homes are empty anyway, and if you can have families to come in and take over these homes, I think it's a great idea. It would bring some kind of stability or something, and maybe that's what we need to wake up the banks and say, you take a home from a family, and you board it up, meanwhile they could be living there.

It erodes a community. These are people who are in their PTA. These are people who are invested in their churches, in their community groups, and block associations. People get evicted, it's not just empty property, but they have to take their kids with them to the shelters or wherever they're going because there is no low-income housing. There's no section 8 going around. It's like a freeze on section 8 right now.

My plan has always been, if I was to lose my home, I could still get an apartment. Life goes on. There is life after foreclosure. That is true. But this is my home, and why not fight for something that's yours?

But I'm here. I'm going to be here. When the sheriff shows up, I'm still going to be here, and after the sheriff shows up, I'm going to be back here. I'm not leaving. My neighbors aren't leaving. People should not be leaving their homes.

OCCUPY THE HOOD

Well, why are people of color missing, right? There are a couple of easy answers to that. For one, it's socio-economic advantages that some people have and they don't. For the most part, people of color have to work and can't take off five days of work and go protest. There's also not a strong enough outreach from the Occupy Wall Street movement to these areas, let's say, Brownsville, the Bronx, or in Queens, where these people of color are impacted directly by the issues that they're fighting for here. What is happening in my life that directly has to do with Wall Street? Let's say, employment. I have to work freelance because I can't get a real job. My sister has \$80,000 in student loans, and that's because education isn't affordable.

My name is Malik, and I come from Occupy the Hood, and the reason I'm here is maybe two weeks ago when I first came down, I just came to watch, and I noticed that my people – brown people, Latinos – were the least represented here. So like with anything, the white community has a cold, we have the flu. So what I did was I went on the internet, I made a twitter just as a sounding board, and it worked. But we're actually organizing in Detroit, helping them organize in New Orleans, so it wasn't my intention. It was just really to wake people up on the internet.

Everyone's getting a bailout except us, black people. Student loans, we have bills. Some of us can't even get bank accounts because we have things delinquent on our accounts. We need a bailout too. I'm looking for my bailout. Give it to me.

Someone is going to get something out of this, obviously. I hope whoever gets something out of this, that they put it in social programs that work. But love came out of it. I've met some people here that I never thought I would even talk to. You know, I met brother Cornell West, and he really supports the movement. Russell Simmons really supports the movement. Lupe Fiasco really supports the movement. So more than anything, awareness, if you can get economic awareness, I'm just speaking for my community, we won't be having these issues that we're having in my community. If you've ever been to Brooklyn or if you've ever been to South Jamaica Queens, we've been occupied by Wall Street for years, you know? The Michael Jordans, all of that stuff. We've been paying out of our pockets for years. Wall Street was built on slave bars. So my agenda is only to get the neighborhood to understand that their money is tied up there too. There's 43 million people on welfare. JP Morgan pedals food stamps in 26 states. They're making money off of my poverty. They're feeding more people here than my mayor feeds. They're feeding more people here than my mayor feeds, and that's a problem. I don't know if you caught this here. Everyday people need food.

I want to thank all the people that donated to Occupy Wall Street because if it wasn't for you guys keeping on funding and keep on donating and keep on sending clothes, socks, shoes, tampons and Tampax for the ladies, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, a lot of things wouldn't be possible. We're just blessed. Thank you.

THE EVICTION OF ZUCCOTTI PARK

They made a joke about me. They made a joke because I had so much stuff. I have no other place to live. I have a chronic illness. I'm not going to go live in the shelters when I'm like this. I have two fucking masters degrees, and because of my medical bills, I have no money, and I lost my apartment of 21 years, and this is the only place I had to go except for the shelters. And then to have the police officers make a joke while I walk across the street is totally unprofessional, completely unprofessional. Who do you think you are? Do you think you're better than me? I used to respect you until this moment. I used to respect you.

Right now, we're in a state of chaos because they have taken the park, and apparently they are not respecting the law as they were told to by the government. They're just going at it, attacking people. They're not showing any peaceful action from a peaceful protest.

"Tell me what democracy looks like, this is what democracy looks like"

"A lot of people want to stay, that's okay, however, there are a lot of really fucking asshole cops..."

Right now, I feel like maybe we're all about to get arrested. I really have no idea. I've never experienced this on the street in New York City before. First of all, they didn't let any press anywhere near what they were doing, and apparently they even banned the helicopters from the news organizations from being up there, so the only helicopters up there now are NYPD helicopters, so there's a total news blackout.

"Whose park? Our park!"

"Let us stay, let us stay!"

You are violating the constitution!

They are prohibited from evicting protesters from Zuccotti Park or otherwise preventing protesters from reentering the park with tents or other property previously utilized.

The police have completely ignored the temporary restraining order, so there basically in contempt of court right now. We're going to be before the judge at 11:30, so there's really nothing we can do until 11:30.

Zuccotti Park will be opening momentarily. When Zuccotti park is reopened, the following bags of property may not be brought into the park: tents, sleeping bags...

THE MORNING AFTER EVICTION

There is no ambiguity in the law here. The First Amendment protects speech. It does not protect the use of tents and sleeping bags to take over a public space. Protesters have had two months to occupy the park with tents and sleeping bags. Now they will have to occupy the space with the power of their arguments.

Everyone waited and waited around Zuccotti Park for hours – waiting for the court and city to decide if we can return. My brothers and sisters know quite well about the legal system in this city, in this nation. It's all bullshit if you don't have any cronies to back you up – the police that guard the affluent, the guys in green vests who guard the affluent. Now that everything is gone from this park, I think it's time for us to find what's been missing from this movement: the colors we don't see in the crowd, the languages we don't hear, the poverty, the suffering, the stories we hear that silences us in discomfort, stories that have beginnings far before yours or mine. This is not the end. This is only the beginning. Occupy Wall Street.

RE-OCCUPY OAKLAND

Now speaking of the occupiers, things got ugly between police and protesters at Occupy Oakland last night. Reports say that hundreds of police from ten different law enforcement agencies arrested 75 people, and some reports and tweets from the ground said police used all tools at their disposal – things like tear gas, flash grenades, and rubber bullets. They started first at Frank Ogawa Plaza outside city hall, and then a second smaller camp nearby, and the police tore down tents, tore down wooden stalls that had stored medical aid and food. So it's yet another clash in another city.

What's wrong with society? What are you fighting?

To be equal.

We have occupied this land. We have basically protected this land now from the banks. These banks are not going to be taking these African American lands. This land is here for the people. Even if they're not rich and have all this types of money, they should be able to pay for this land within their means.

Because you can stand up. There's a lot of things you can do to protect yourself from these types of vampires. And now we have all come to awaken at one time, and we see what's going on and we're not going to sit back and let what happened to us keep happening over and over again. The neighbors, they're not even familiar with what's going on. So they're afraid of what happened in downtown and think it's going to be happening here, the same effect. And you know, they have babies and children, and they see what kind of savages we were dealing with. So it ain't us, we ain't pull the triggers. We just pulling the trigger on the truth to let people know that this has been going on for many years. They've been hiding knowledge and just trying to serve us, like okay, we're humans. We are truly human beings and we have humanity. We have dignity. We're civilized. We've got to be civilized for us all to be different nationalities and genders and all the things, and we getting along together. It's a new moon.

It's a new era. It's not about the civil rights movement. It's about the human rights movement now.

It's all in the air.

We gotta take baby steps, slowly but surely. We getting out the old system and coming in with the new. And that shit was built on murder, robbery, killing, raping, and all the shit, which is all of the effects of all of their bullshit. Coming at our children, and trying to dictate our lives and take from us. And now we going to show these vampires, man. We going to put them in the sun.

People can't find jobs, and they're using taxpayers' money to pay police to stand around and fucking record it.

Go find some murderers, there's cases in Oakland.

“Whatever we do tonight, as a group, we're not giving up on this fight, we shut down, that port, we can shut it down, across the town, across the state, and make it happen.”

HOMELESS FAMILY OCCUPIES FORECLOSED HOME IN BROOKLYN

Due to the fact that there's countless homeless people in the street, including myself and my family, we're here to fight back and let the government know and the big banks that they're not going to take advantage of our communities anymore. And you see the family right here so, Tasha... And let it be known that this is the first time that they've ever been involved in anything like this. That goes to show you that you don't have to have prior experience to do this stuff. My son right here has never been in front of a camera, but he loves the camera and loves fighting for what's right, and I think that's all that matters.

Because constantly that's all they ask, "Mommy, are we moving again? Mommy, are we moving again? Mommy, are we moving again?" They're really young so they don't know much about everything that's going on. I just want a place for me and my kids. Why y'all have foreclosure apartments? Shouldn't you be fixing it up and giving it to people like us?

The real criminals are Wall Street and these big banks that are foreclosing these homes and leaving families homeless and in the street and in the shelter. We've had a lot of support from Occupy Wall Street as well as other organizations, non-profit organizations that are involved in this kind of work, and with their assistance we were able to do outreach and speak to people in the community to gain their support on this. And most people out here agree with what we're fighting for. For example, Dee and Theresa, who lives here.

And making everything work together, not just for one person but for everybody. So it's important that whatever we have that we can offer to help somebody else, give it. It'll come back too. It will come back.

I'm trying to do what I have to do because this is the only option right now.

Would you like to open that door?

Let's get in the room! The first question you have to ask yourself is why? Why is it that these communities have to go through these issues? Why is it that we have to suffer while the wealthy get richer? Like why is that? Ultimately, when we start thinking about it and start that dialogue within these communities - within our communities, we can start addressing it.

Mommy! Mommy, Dad! Everybody's here and they're looking for us!

They are? Who's here?

Everybody!

Show me!

Empty homes were the target of this latest protest by the Occupy Wall Street Movement, and Alfredo Carrasquillo and his family were among the protesters. They've taken up residence in one of the district's vacant properties.

We took matters into our own hands and claimed back property that was taken away from the community.

Some of the residents in this Brooklyn neighborhood were happy to see the protesters.

“I want to thank, all of the people, who live in these houses, that support what we’re doing, I want to thank, all you people, who came out today, in the rain, in the nasty weather, and supported us, in this occupation, this moment is really special.”

"Our homes are under attack! We’ve got to take them back!"

OCCUPY AMERICA

We require that you immediately leave the park on a temporary basis. If you decide to return, you will not be permitted to bring tents, sleeping bags, tarps, and similar materials with you. If you fail to immediately leave the park, you will be subject to arrest.

They came in the middle of the night with no notice and just told us to leave. We refused to leave. We locked arms and started singing in a peaceful manner. They came. They dragged us. They beat us. They violated basically every right they're supposed to be protecting. It was awful, but you know what? It made our spirits so much stronger.

If you like what's being said, put your hands up. You're okay with it, you're right in here. Down, you're not so happy about it.

"Fuck this shit." That was a quote from him. He said people are just tired of all of it. Fuck it all.

One week ago, I don't even think we could be standing here because there would be wall-to-wall tents everywhere. People couldn't get in and out. People were starting to get sick. The camp hadn't been cleaned in about a month.

You don't think it was such a bad thing then?

Well, when it happened I was heart-broken along with other people, and learning later that it was very rough the way they did the removal. Yet people who came down here over the past six weeks, or two months, they're still coming down here.

What do we want? Well for starters, tax the rich, stop the wars, Medicare and jobs for all. That's pretty much the essence of what I think most people would agree on. There might not be unanimity of specific goals, but there's certainly a consensus as to the general direction.

One of the biggest criticisms is that this movement isn't really organized, there's no big demand, and I think that the problem is bigger than that.

I think a lot has happened in the last thirty years to undermine the regulations and the culture that was in place during the 1930s. We had this terrible financial crisis, but then we had the safety net, we had social security, later on we had Medicare, we had Glass-Steagall, tried to get the banks out of the speculative business. All of that was undone, and then we wound up, boom, 2008, the whole mess goes down the drain.

Want to show us a couple of your buttons?

Here's one of my favorites, "Wake up from the American Dream. Create a livable American reality." There's been a lot of talk about recapturing the American Dream. To me, the only way to recapture a dream is to fall back asleep, right? We want to wake people up.

I was working on this building right over here, and I came after work. I mean, I was always with it in my heart, but I was just coming down to see what was going on. And I was standing by the corner with the sculpture there, and I saw about twenty cops come rushing through with their riot gear, and I started walking down the street here. And I saw this kid with blood all over his head, dripping down his face, getting arrested. Right after that happened, there was a knocked over barrier in the street, and another kid stepped into the barrier, and the cop pulled it out right from under him and knocked the kid flat on his face, and I grabbed the kid's hand and pulled him up. That moment when I pulled him up, that was the moment I became part of this movement.

The longshoremen in solidarity with the general strike of Oakland have shut down the port.

The general strike was probably one of the most beautiful moments in the whole Occupy movement. Basically we marched all around the city, but then around 4 o'clock we struck all the way to the port, and it was like upwards of 20,000 people.

I remember walking and being like, "god, when am I going to get to the end?" 500 people at this gate, 500 people at this gate, 1000 people at that gate.

Our speaker who was on the mic, he said, "turn around you can't believe what you see." We turned around. All of these bodies on the bridge, all of them, you could not see the end.

Why do you occupy the ports?

A lot of it is around working class issues, the longshoremen who work at the ports are not benefitting from the massive amount of income that the ports generate.

When we shut it down, we sent a message to that 1% that, you know, if we really bond together, unify, put the "united" back in United States, we can really get something done and change the system.

In New York, their Wall Street is Wall Street. Our Wall Street is the port.

We were allowed to occupy for a while, and then they decided that, "You've had your freedom of assembly and speech long enough. I think it's time for that to stop."

The police are part of the 99%. Yeah, they are, but not until they take off their badge, take off the uniform, and join us. Up until then, they are protecting the interests of the money class, and that became crystal clear on the morning of the 25th.

It was like 5-5:30 that they really started mobilizing around the edges, and everybody started getting really fucking scared because, like, holy shit, I've never seen this many police in my life before.

Were people leaving?

People started leaving because people were afraid. It also seemed like there's not enough people to hold the space. I remember being shot with LRAD, being like, "whoa, what the hell? What was that?" Looking at everybody's all hectic and crazy, tear gas going in, there's flash bangs, and there's these rubber bullets flying and the cops are marching in.

When police aren't around, to a certain extent, things don't get agitated, and people manage themselves.

The protests end up not peaceful because the police arrive in riot gear. We don't start the riot. They come dressed up for one.

It looks innocuous. It looks like a bunch of people at night drumming and playing guitar and all that, but when people live together like that in the name of politics, people start talking.

There's people that have never ever, like myself, been active at all in anything.

There's a lot of people that came in apolitical or progressive, but without any real activist leanings, and they're coming out of it as activists.

I don't really want a huge bloody revolution. Who does? The system has got to change, and frankly, there's talk about the anarchists and the socialists and the communists, and all these "ists" and "isms" stuff, and frankly, I don't give a rat's ass if it's the Keebler-fucking-elves that comes up with the solution to the problem.

Going to make sure this doesn't go anywhere.

So why do you occupy the tree?

I've seen what the city has done and the many lies that have been used to justify their clearing out the public from the public space. Every single day, they've been turning on the sprinklers, multiple times, so they can flood the plaza and flood the people out of here.

These problems that Occupy is trying to address are not just on Wall Street. They're everywhere, and this is where I live, so why not stay here and be a part of it here?

Cincinnati really is in some ways a microcosm for the United States as far as our economy is concerned. We have these Fortune 500 companies here making tons of cash, and statistically, among cities 250,000 and above, we're in the top 5 for poverty level.

New York is big. Oakland is big. Los Angeles is big. Philly is big. We're a small town, but we're a tight knit town, and we're a community-oriented town, and we're expanding our community here on the ground.

We built the rig to basically heighten awareness that we are devoting so much of our resources towards subsidizing fossil fuel industries.

We are ground zero for the fossil fuel industry here – Ohio, Kentucky, the Appalachian Mountains. So we built the rig, and we rolled it down onto the street, and we realized it was taller than the streetlights. We decided, "What the hell. We got to go down the middle of the street."

The city did not want a group of citizens peacefully talking about its corruption.

I will say the police were not rough. There was no pepper spray. There were no clubs.

I believe in this situation that the police were kind messengers of a not-kind message.

After the evictions, it was harder to organize. You don't have a camp where people can come at any point in the day, 24 hours a day to come and speak their minds.

It looks like there's nobody here. It looks like Occupy doesn't exist because the tents are gone.

Sometimes I get concerned about, "oh, the number in Cincinnati, we don't have enough." Well, first of all, anyone you have is enough.

Sometimes you might be the only one out there standing with a sign, and you feel stupid, right? You feel like, "well, what am I doing?" I think it opens up an opportunity for people to have the conversations that we need to be having.

Our government doesn't want us to be involved anymore. They want to operate on behalf of profit and financial power.

"Tell me what democracy looks like. This is what democracy looks like!"

"Let us march!"

"Our streets!"

"Wall Street, your kingdom must come down. Wall Street, your kingdom must come down."

We're all struggling. We all want our kids to have futures. We want to be able to be educated. We want to be able to have basic needs met and feel some security.

We are 99%. 1% own this country.

The system has to either be broken down, rebuilt, and changed completely or there has to be some fundamental changes immediately.

These problems aren't going away unless we step up and solve them.

Even if the movement were to stop this moment, this would have achieved a change in conversation.

All the working people of this world are united. It's bigger than this country. It's bigger than anything they can control, and their ivory tower is going to fall.

Have courage, have patience, have compassion.

Keep strong, and keep fighting.

You have to keep it on. You have to hang tough.

Man, keep it going. Keep it going.

Keep it up. That's all I got to say. We are making a difference, and they are hearing us.

"We are the 99%!"

WE ARE FARMERS, WE GROW FOOD FOR THE PEOPLE

I've got an admission to make. I've never been in New York City in my life. This is my first time. I'm Jim Gerritsen, and I'm a family farmer in Aroostook County, Maine. My family and I run Wood Prairie Farm, which is a farm that we've had for 35 years. Our goal is to produce the highest quality seed and food that tastes good, that performs well, that leaves the land in a better condition for our sons and daughters to farm in the next generation. Most organic farmers that I know, we work 80 to 100 hours a week, so getting away is something we don't often do. When I came to hear about the Occupy Wall Street Farmers' March, I immediately thought I needed to get down and to let our friends at Occupy Wall Street know that the American farmers are behind them. The Occupy Wall Street Farmers' March began with a rally in the East Village.

My name is Karen Washington, and I'm an urban farmer. I grow food. I feed people body and mind.

We brought family farmers here today to stand with our urban allies and Occupy Wall Street to show people all across the country, and across the world, family farmers stand with Occupy Wall Street, and rural America stands with Occupy Wall Street.

There was a real sense of community down there, but these people are absolutely serious. They're authentic.

We have failed to enforce anti-trust laws, which prevent monopoly, our biggest threat to our freedom and our democracy. We've lost over 40 percent of our ranchers. We've lost over 80 percent of our dairymen because of big corporate abusive power.

The problems that they described are absolutely real.

We have a situation now where family farmers, if we should be contaminated by GMO crops that come from Monsanto's side of the fence onto our fence, not only do we lose the value of that crop as a contaminated crop, but the way that Monsanto looks at it, they think that we are holding their technology, and we didn't pay them royalty on it, so we are subject to patent infringement litigation because they've contaminated us, and we end up losing our farm through bankruptcy just trying to clear our name.

Later in the afternoon, we began the march to Zuccotti Park. I encountered home gardeners both in rural America and urban America. There were food activists. There were people who worked in the food industry, people that were simply consumers who wanted to make sure that they had options for feeding good food to their families. We finished the evening with a seed swap, where some of us that grow seed brought seed down to provide to the folks so they could take them home and plant the seed in their garden.

"This is good wheat. We can plant it. No one can control it, except the people. We are farmers. We grow food, for the people."

Too many of the commenters are saying that the Occupy Movement is too vague about what the problems are. I couldn't disagree any more. The reality is that we have a corporate dominated economy, a corporate dominated government, and that these are squeezing family farmers and forcing them off the land, and this is something that we have to change. We need to have more family farmers. What we need to regain for our children's sake is a true democracy in action as well as word.

WE THE PEOPLE HAVE FOUND OUR VOICE

“They have taken our houses for an illegal foreclosure process by not having the original mortgage. They have taken bailouts from taxpayers. With impunity, they continue to give CEOs exorbitant bonuses.”

I’m one of those people who was kicked to the side. There’s nothing out there for me anymore.

We is not a democrat. We is not a republican. We is not a liberal. We is not a conservative. We is just everybody that wants some kind of change.

I was on my way home, and I just felt I had to be there.

What’s going on is a natural and organic progression of an autonomous large group of people.

We get more people every day. We need them because we get more donations every day, and more people come to the park every day – at least 3,000 a day.

We have a notebook full of kitchens – some of them apartments, some of them restaurant kitchens – that let us go there and cook our food because the police won’t let us have any exposed heating elements.

Hey, Captain! I didn’t steal your lunch money. You ain’t gotta beat me up.

How many innocent people are you gonna assault before this is over, Captain?

It just looks so outlandish to arrest 800 people on a bridge that were peaceful. It got us a lot of media attention. It was huge for that.

The corporate media has been portraying us, and oftentimes they haven’t been portraying us in an honest and realistic fashion. We’re trying to send out a more realistic picture of what we’re doing here to encapsulate the many different messages and opinions here and help portray them to the wider community.

Not all of us are anti-state, I guess, but we all come from a pretty anti-capitalist place.

Occupy Wall Street, for me, is not about Occupy Wall Street. It’s about finding more people to talk to, who have that voice that you want to hear, to organize with them.

“We have peaceably assembled here, as is our right.”

“Mic check! We the people have found our voice!”

“Everybody move a little closer.”

We've grown incredibly fast, and we're in the process of building power. We need non-hierarchical structures within society, in which there's no oppression, there's no domination of one person over another person.

We got most of the major unions in New York State to endorse – unions like 1199, AFSCME, the Working Families Party.

Right now, we got New York, Jersey, Portland, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago going to my knowledge.

It takes people with a lot of dedication and a lot of commitment to be out here demonstrating in the cold, in the rain, 24/7. If they didn't think that the cause was important to them, they wouldn't be doing it.

First time since the 60s, a generation redefining itself at a very high level of community, of caring about each other, tolerating all kinds of differences between different people.

It may not be super-efficient – the kind of efficient you would expect in a hierarchy where you can just go through a bureaucracy. It takes a little time, but we understand the process. We understand what this means, in that you have to be accommodating so that we can stand by principles.

“Another very exciting thing: Tomorrow at 9am, we are receiving 100,000 copies of the first edition of the newspaper of this occupation. It is called The Occupy Wall Street Journal.”

“We will send the message that this is the U.S. fall responding to the Arab spring.”

There is a sense of urgency, and you sense that in the space, the space is activated, but really there has to be an allowance for these processes, which are natural and organic.

Hold up everything. Hold up Wall Street. Make sure it's a frozen zone. Impact it with thousands and thousands and thousands of people so they can't be able to move, they can't get to work on time. Hold it up again at 5 o'clock. Hold up the bridges. Take control of the streets.

NEW YORK STUDENTS RISING

We can't handle any more tuition hikes. We can't handle any more cuts to public education. SUNY, CUNY, the community colleges.

And with the way that public funding for education is going, and the way that the SUNY system is currently operating, it's gonna make it by the time that I have fulfilled my career goals, that I am working in schools, the majority of my students won't be able to afford to go to college. And at the salary I'll be making, I most likely will not be able to afford to send my own children to college.

As a graduate assistant, I'm here just deeply concerned for not only myself as a student but my students as well. The price of an education is going up, and the quality of an education is going down. And so I'm here to kind of try and keep education affordable not only for the students who are in class right now but for future generations.

By whiting out tuition, that means like raising it high enough that people of color can't go and can't afford to attend school, then the entire public education system in New York is going to fail.

We aren't at the table when they decide on policy for SUNY and CUNY. And really we've tried more diplomatic routes. We've tried petitions. We've tried talking to people. And that doesn't seem to be working. They don't seem to be hearing us.

If a student leaves college in debt, they're going to take the first job that they get. They're not going to have the freedom to explore things – the freedom to find out what they are good at and like to do. Student debt is this thing that essentially chains people to decisions that are outside of their control.

My campus has seen program closures. Full-time faculty and staff have been fired. Full-time positions are left unfilled or replaced with contingent labor. Graduate student funding has decreased. There is a whole series of other cuts, small and large, all important, all of which have dramatically affected the quality of education at our university. Higher education is a public good of enormous social value. It needs to be a New York State priority. It's a beautiful day for an uprising. The faculty rise up with you.

The people have much more numbers than the 1%ers do, than the government does. So direct action pretty much just reminds them of that – that the government is working for us, that we're not working for them.

I think that direct action is a great way to take advantage of the freedoms of living in a democracy.

People are getting arrested today during these direct actions to make a point that we have to take these extreme measures to get any attention, whether it's in the media or from our lawmakers. They don't wanna listen to us if they don't have to. And by having these arrests take place, they

can't ignore us anymore.

You tell us that we have to go through these traditional routes and lobbying and stuff like that, and we've seen that that's not effective so obviously something else has to be done.

The government is making it so that education is only available for the 1% and for nobody else.

There is no way to make up the gap of twenty years of eroded funding and systematic budget cuts by forcing students to pay more and more and more.

Our priorities should not be being set up by those wealthy campaign donors in the top 1% who can buy the policies that they want to get the tax breaks that they want when all of us are just trying to make ends meet, support our families, and make it through college.

We want to see people treated more fairly, and the way to do that is in the classroom and through teaching and education.

A well-educated population will be able to make well-informed, well-educated decisions, and then logically the results that follow from there will be good. I mean, that's what we want. We want a good world or an excellent world.

The world is getting more complicated, not less complicated, and that if we don't take action now and step up and really represent ourselves, the 1% will continue to dominate the narrative and make choices that aren't good for the American people.

Education is really what gives people power to pretty much know what they want to enlighten them and honestly to liberate them. I mean, you can't really be liberated without education, so it's vital to every person.

And I think education is beyond just learning skills for a job. I think education helps you to understand who you are as a person, what kind of person you want to be, and what kind of world you want to live in.

OCCUPY MUSEUMS

“Since the birth of neo-liberalism, we've been told, that we can be placated, we can be satisfied, we can be bought off, by gadgets like this, and celebratory, spaces like this.”

“What kind of economic system, lets one company or person, amass so much wealth, that they get to decide, what is free...”

“Art is not a luxury item, but 25 dollar admission fees, are a luxury item.”

“MOMA! When art is just a luxury, “art” is a lie!”

“Sotheby's! Hang art, not workers. End your lockout!”

OCCUPY THE DOE

“The Panel for Education Policy, or PEP, enacts policy for the New York City Dept. of Education. The PEP replaced the Board of Education when Mayor Bloomberg took control of the schools in 2002. It is intended to be a democratic forum where people voice concerns, prior to the panel’s vote on educational policy. Today the panel is convening to discuss new standards being implemented in schools. 200 parents, teachers, staff, and students are in attendance.”

If I could have your attention, please?

Mic check! The Panel for Educational Policy claims to be a democratic forum for parents, teachers, and students. They make their decisions way before coming here, regardless of what the people have to say. This is not a democracy.

I am a parent, and I am a teacher, and I would like the PEP to know that they are out of touch with New York City school children.

The Common Core Standards, which are as much about evidence as shouting...

I want to know what the chancellor is so afraid of.

This! This is the partnership!

They want to raise standards but don’t want to raise the necessary support to reach those standards.

Before the chancellor leaves and the panel leaves, we want to present them with an open invitation to attend a real discussion about education in this city at the General Assembly.

Chancellor, would you like to take your invitation?

So, Chancellor Walcott...

I didn’t interrupt you when you were talking. Don’t interrupt me when I’m talking.

We’re trying to present the people’s voices that you’ve been shutting out routinely since you’ve been put into position.

Shame! Shame!

Mic check!

My name is Madriana. I am an 8 year-old 3rd grader. I want smaller classes, including teachers and school aids. My classes is too big. My class has 28 students. More support for teachers, less state tests, and more art and music is my school.

Show me what democracy looks like. This is what democracy looks like!

NAOMI KLEIN ON THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT

You know, it just shows that you never can predict when people will reach their breaking point and when suddenly what you've been told was impossible will just seem inevitable. What's just so incredible is how often we're told that people don't care, that they're apathetic, that they're happy with the status quo, particularly Americans. You know, we're always under-selling Americans about what they want, what they're capable of. There's just such an industry of really under-selling this country, and what's been amazing to see is just the hunger out there for connection, for de-commodified space, for really radical ideas, and this is such a joyful space, such a joyful movement, people get addicted to it. This is the thing, there's no coercion, there's no sense of duty, like, oh god I have to go to the march. It's the exact opposite. It's that people want to spend their Saturday nights here, they want to bring friends here, they want to come every day. That's what happened to me. I didn't plan to be here every day, but I've been here every day. And it's just heartbreaking to leave, and people are just getting a taste of another possible way of living, and that's so important in a culture where our biggest problem is not that we don't know the failures of capitalism, it's that we can't imagine another way. We can't imagine another system. This generation grew up being told that there is no alternative to capitalism, that this is all there is, and so when you taste another alternative, when you feel it, when you see it, when you experience it, it's life changing because you'll never believe again that there is no alternative.

You know, nobody predicted this movement so anyone who claims they know where this is going is just lying. This has already gotten so far beyond what the original organizers imagined, and what I hope is that this moment really turns into a sustained popular movement for social change with the institutions that are needed to go with that, and that means cultural, that means media, that means arts, it also means politics. It means having the ability to speak for itself. My concern about this movement is if it stays just amorphous, then all of this energy here will just be used and channeled by people who may have much more reformist demands and who really aren't dreaming big. I think it's fine for people who just want to raise taxes on the rich or just want to regulate the banks to use the momentum and energy of this moment to try to push through their demands, but I don't think that that should be all this movement is. I think this movement should be able to make much more radical demands than that, but not even demands, be able to articulate another narrative for what society should be like and have the ability to unleash a much more radical imagination for what this world can be. But it has to develop the democratic means to speak for itself in order for that to happen. You know, when people are trying to co-opt you, sometimes the reaction is to go in the totally opposite direction and just be like, we don't have a structure, we don't have an ideology, and nobody can pin us down. I've been parts of movements that have made that decision, and I think that that would be a mistake, and I also think that it doesn't live up to the moral responsibility of this moment. So many lives are on the line right now. This system is crashing. It's crashing economically, and it's crashing ecologically. The stakes are too high for us not to make the absolute most of this moment.

OCCUPY BAT SIGNAL FOR THE 99%

I see it. That's where they're going to be.

They're going to be right below it?

Yeah, right below it.

We are unstoppable, yeah?

Yeah, then let's just do the chant, "We are unstoppable, another world is possible." Let's do that for a while.

20,000. Maybe 10 to 20 thousand? All right, so we've got some time – we're still at the very tip – you want to hit it when they get halfway across, you think?

I'm going to hit it in a few minutes.

They're responding directly to it.

"We are the 99%!"

"This is the most incredible experience of my life!"

"We are unstoppable, another world is possible!"

OFFICIAL OCCUPY WALL STREET THANK YOU

All right, let's roll. We're going to 60 Wall Street.

This is like the Parisian arcade where all the ideas are.

There's 8 meetings running simultaneously. There's 85 working groups I heard today.

I've been here since the 17th. I started on facilitation. I'm extremely outgoing when it comes to getting people's contacts and networking.

There was never a choice. For as long as I can remember, I was always going to be doing something like this at some point. I was frustrated not knowing when that was going to be, and then I saw this start to happen, and it was so on point. It was so exactly what needed to happen. The discussion on the table, it had domestic and global implications, and I just saw it and said yes, I'm going to go there go do this with everything I have.

That idea, that revolutionary possibility, was sewn in Cairo for me. I saw it. That's like one of those things where no one predicts it, no one sees it, it seems completely impossible outside of any sort of historical pattern, just, kaboom!

"We want to shut down every entrance, so a couple of people should stay here. The rest go to the next, shut it down!"

Hey, what color were you thinking for the donate button? Blue? Or the green?

Green or blue, there's some options. I was thinking that the links could be blue, but I think green certainly promotes action, makes people feel comfortable, it says money, it says go. Green means go, yeah.

I've been working in the international arena for now 6 years, and I decided that I needed a break. And then I was also deciding that I don't want to work for large institutions any more, and then this came about and was just like perfect. We craft narratives. That's part of action planning. What is the action for? What is the outcome of it? What is the message we want people to walk away with? And through that, also being highly engaged and highly aware of how our actions and things we interact with on a day-to-day basis affect people all over the world.

"Look at the faces of these young people. They are not hateful. They do not despise you. Please treat us as brothers and sisters. We are supporting your cause, the cause of working people, the cause of the police that doesn't get paid enough. Let us pray together for peace and justice. Thank you."

How we like to start the meeting is just taking a minute to be aware of all of the people around the planet who are engaged in this work with us right now.

So we have a lot of groups here tonight, which is amazing. This could not be a movement – Occupy Wall Street could not be a movement without every single one of the working groups here. Can we just give it up for all of the working groups?

Hey everybody. When I got out of jail this morning, I thought a lot about how we were going to continue and where we're going to go from here because it's a long fight. Everybody here knows that, I hope. And I think two answers to that are one, direct democracy, and secondly, direct action. People need to get out there. They need to lose their fear. When four hundred people raid the park, and they take all of our material things, that's nothing. It doesn't matter. This is a movement, and a movement is an idea. This is about social and economic justice, and you can't take that with 400 riot police. You cannot. We are the 99%!

[END]