

# Occupy Wall Street — revolt to reform

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## Introduction

The revolts in Tunisia and Egypt and the destruction of Libya<sup>[1]</sup> by the transnational elite (through NATO and its “rebels” and various mercenaries under the auspices of the UN and the Arab League), labeled the “Arab Spring”, did NOT teach the world about democracy. In fact it taught the world that the transnational elite do not care a whit for democracy, self-determination or autonomy for any individual, group or state. The US has never supported genuine revolution in Tunisia or Egypt, but supported a handover of power that would replace the autocrats in each country with a puppet caretaker government. Although the US is dissatisfied with the Egyptian military for recently shutting down Egyptian civil society groups and three American (financed by the Democratic and Republican parties) NGOs, this action will neither jeopardize the over billion dollars of military hardware yearly the US transfers to the Egyptian military, nor endanger US control over the military. The bigger problem for the US is the Islamists (especially those in the “Left” of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafists). This is why the US elite is courting with the mild Islamists of the Brotherhood who would now control Parliament and with whom the US elite would like to create a kind of ‘Turkish’ balance between the army and the Islamists. On the other hand, the American-funded NGOs in Egypt could play the role of checking this balance and encouraging a greater degree of integration of the country into neoliberal globalization and its ideology.<sup>[2]</sup> Barack Obama, through his press secretary, citing the recent deaths of protesters, recommends that the military junta set in motion “the full transfer of power to a civilian government...as soon as possible.”<sup>[3]</sup> Egypt, Tunisia and Libya are in the process of being fully integrated into the internationalized market economy and some form of representative “democracy”. However, along with a host of reliant and repressive Middle East sheikdoms favorable to the US, the monarchy of Bahrain which brutally put down a rebellion with US weapons and the Saudi Arabian military, and Saudi Arabia, the classic theocratic monarchy, are issued just friendly reminders from the transnational elite that they should implement mild reforms in the near future.

Is it not surprising that war criminal Hillary Clinton, an early ardent behind the scene backer and fomenter (using State Department proxies to supply the “revolutionaries” training on using social networks to quickly spread “democracy”) of Arab Spring, has not spoken in support or favor of #Occupy Wall Street (#OWS) as being on the right side of history in its struggle for the re-distribution of economic power in the US? Will Hillary court #OWS and defend its right to free speech and peaceful assembly? Will Hillary greet #OWS as the victims of the vast financial

inequality in the US where 11% of the population has accumulated more wealth than 89% of the population? Has Hillary “Tweeted” #OWS in her support for them to overthrow the elite?

## Revolt and Repression

The uprising in the US known as #Occupy Wall Street<sup>[4]</sup> having more than half of all Americans supporting it, has been continually on the receiving end of police repression. The US police state has repeatedly attacked, arrested, and evicted peaceful #OWSers around the country. So the US, (in other words, the US elite) just as it did in the North Africa Arab Spring, will not support a movement that questions the unequal distribution of wealth, let alone any movement that will even vaguely aim to replace the capitalist system and re-build a new society. The US elite will not allow this to happen no matter how unjust, unequal or undemocratic the system is, because their fundamental aim is that the concentration of political and economic power should remain in the hands of the political and economic elites, who would never give up their power willingly, and as a matter of fact it is they who initiate systemic violence.

#OWS is to be complimented for refocusing the American crisis from Congress’ overly pathetic concern about the US deficit to the gaping financial inequality revealed by the financial crisis whose problems cannot be solved by the corrupted system. Thus #OWS has brought national attention to the fiscal disparity and inequality created in the US. The people who protest, identify and support #OWS are the victims of the vast concentration of economic wealth gained at the expense of the rest of the population. Current census statistics show that poverty increased markedly in the past few years. At present, 16% of Americans, 49 million people, live in poverty, and some 15 million children go to sleep hungry. Soon the ranks of the poor will grow, when Congress axes more social programs demanded by spending cuts. In view of the fact that the super committee failed to come to agreement by the designated time, automatic and more painful cutbacks will take effect.<sup>[5]</sup> The African-American and Latino communities are being hit much harder with poverty rates of 25% and 28% respectively.<sup>[6]</sup> #OWS will look like child’s play to the unrest and social decay that will grow with the fuel of 10 million more people thrust into poverty in the next few years.<sup>[7]</sup>

Many hundreds of cities in the US and around the world have Occupations. In the US the repressive arm of the state was doing what it was supposed to do—beat, gas, pepper spray, arrest- any person they deem a threat to their power. US state terror directed against its own peaceful protesters was what propelled #OWS onto the world’s stage. The NYPD fascists illegally raided, beat, pepper sprayed, arrested, destroyed and removed the #OWS encampment at Liberty Park on 16 November. Lawyers for #OWS acquired a judicial injunction at about 7am to keep Liberty Park open and allow protesters to have tents, etc. Billionaire Mayor Bloomberg, who has said repeatedly that the protesters are not above the law, not only promptly put himself above the law and ignored the injunction, but also he and his paramilitary forces would not allow the protesters back into the park until he could find a puppet judge to supersede the injunction and rule that the protesters can go into the park, but without camping essentials. Almost twelve hours later the protesters were allowed back in. Neither Bloomberg nor his Gestapo troopers were held in contempt of the court order. They

are accountable to no one and change the rules as they please. So, there are two justices in America. There is one justice for the rich and powerful who can do as they like and another justice for the poor who are the victims of unequal justice, just as America is divided, with the shrinking of the middle-class, into rich and poor. The right to peacefully assemble around the country is under attack, as has been said many times in this Journal. Furthermore and very troubling is the disclosure that Mayor Quan, the lackey of Oakland, participated in a conference call with mayors of eighteen #OWS cities discussing when chronological invasions against peacefully assembled people would take place. What is even more disturbing is that the training for the invasions of the public space by the riot police was coordinated at the Federal level with Homeland Security and the FBI who gave “tactical and planning advice” for the massive invasions to come. The press was not allowed to cover the Liberty Park invasion. There was a no fly zone declared in the air space above Liberty Square so news helicopters were grounded, even police-credentialed reporters were arrested, subway stops were closed, elected officials arrested, rubber bullets and teargas canisters were fired into crowds of peaceful demonstrators, even the elderly were pepper sprayed at close range, wheelchair bound people were arrested, and police barricaded a one block area around the park. This is the same treatment of the free press as the Pentagon uses — no free press![\[8\]](#) This aggressive, belligerent and violent behavior is beyond corruption and bullying. It is state sponsored terror, and the premier state sponsor of terror is the US. Steve Best accurately lays out the relation of the “perfect dialectic of capitalism and repression, repression and capitalism, whereby cops and security forces (including the rent-a-mercenaries from of security firms) not only protect capitalism, but turn fascism and repression into a highly profitable business, which of course is partnered along with the privatized cops and security forces and prison-for-profit industry”.[\[9\]](#) Lobbyists who perceive #OWS as a threat to business as usual have ramped up their efforts. For example, a Washington lobbying firm with direct links to Speaker Boehner, and with links to the financial industry has proposed an \$850,000 plan to vilify #OWS and the politicians who support it in the hope to undermine it.[\[10\]](#)

Yet Obama[\[11\]](#) did not have any qualms in getting into the act of appropriating the Occupy rhetoric in order to strike a death blow into irrelevancy. The financial crisis was created he says, “with the breathtaking greed of a few with irresponsibility across the system...and ever since it has sparked protests...by people occupying the streets of New York and other cities.” “I believe”, he says, “that this country succeeds when everyone gets a fair shot, when everyone does their fair share, when everyone plays by the same rules.” By adopting #OWS themes in his recent speeches, Obama has effectively consigned #OWS into irrelevancy.

## **Reform and the Degenerate “Left”**

#OWS in some ways resembles the poor people’s campaign planned by Martin Luther King, but it lacks the grassroots and organizational structure and strategy. In other words, #OWS does not have a political project (i.e. an analysis of the causes of the present crisis, the aims that a future society has to achieve and the transitional strategy for the move from here to there) which is necessary to secure the participation of more and more people .If #OWS is an opposition movement against the system, as it heralds itself to be, it has neither provided a manifesto for revolution nor an anti-systemic project to build a new autonomous society.[\[12\]](#)

Clearly, the overthrow of the System and re-making society is not its aim, although some participants may have been thinking along these terms. The NYC #OWS general assembly declaration taken on 29 September 2011 reads like a Chomskyite list of reformist grievances from the “bottom” that demands change from the top, “our system must protect our rights” [13] It is as if all the problems of the world are caused by some bad corporations or corrupt politicians and no mention at all is made that they are created by the capitalist system of the market economy of which they are the natural outgrowth! Supposed radicals and their ilk completely disorient and attempt to reduce the Occupy movement to a set of demands to improve the functioning of corporations and representative "democracy" by creating some smiley, green and responsible capitalism!!! #OWS has not identified the System it rages against in where it erroneously claims 99% of the population is imprisoned.

Although #OWS blames corrupt banksters and their evil institutions as the criminals who created the financial crisis and whose corporate ideology and their minions in Congress have taken over the US government and created acute economic inequality and injustice, the #OWS declaration of occupation is only a list of grievances against corrupt financial enablers who fill capitalist institutions. However, the crisis extends way beyond greedy or corrupt financiers and their institutions to the capitalist System of the market economy and its political complement representative “democracy” itself which concentrates political and economic power into fewer hands.

Movements are tolerable only to the extent that they are not an irritant to the elite. #OWS promotes the idea of “nonviolent” and “democratic” change, with no anti-systemic project, but only some minor demands or at most anti-capitalist slogans with no comprehensive program behind them. The same happened with the Spanish and Greek indignados. However, lacking any anti-systemic analysis or project #OWS is equivalent with being a reformist movement. Indeed, the problem with capitalism according to #OWS is that is it the greedy capitalists who corrupted the economy and who now run the government which exacerbated the financial crisis. As a protest movement against economic inequality and Wall Street greed #OWS subscribes to a utopia—capitalist economic democracy—which is neither feasible nor desirable. It is not feasible because democracy and capitalism are antithetical, and not desirable because of systemic class divisions caused by political and economic inequality, and the inherent injustices it produces. #OWS is far from a revolutionary project, because it not only wants the market pie cut equitably, but it also does not question the unequal power distribution, the entrenched class relations based on power divisions of the System itself, nor of course it questions its legitimacy. The system is a failure for them because it has not provided for the financial well-being of its citizens. Economic democracy that #OWS is fighting for is an impossibility under the System of the market economy and representative “democracy”. #OWS and the groups and unions that support it effectively disorient the movement into creating forms of ‘direct democracy’ to fight the greedy banks and corporations which supposedly created the present capitalist crisis and not the internationalized capitalist market economy!

At the same time, veteran American political activists from the reformist Left, progressive organizations, unions, alliances, and newcomers have taken up the #OWS struggle as #OWS is the most radical movement in decades. It therefore supports and coordinates with these

individuals and groups. Yet, for all this, reformism rules. For example, Cornel West says on Democracy Now, “if in fact we continue to have this kind of magnificent movement here and around the world, we want to be able to connect the corporate greed not just on Wall Street, but in the military-industrial complex, the prison-industrial complex, and the corporate-media multiplex, so that we have an inclusive, systemic analysis...” A pro-systemic analysis can only provide for reforms while keeping the system intact. West is not even thinking anti-systemic! He too identifies the cause of inequality in America as being one of corruption. So, West’s systemic analysis that the cause of the multidimensional crisis is greed and corruption is ludicrous. Greed is appropriated and exploited by the system through competition. Greed is not the cause of the crisis! After stating that the Occupy movement has exposed “the ways in which both parties are tied to oligarchic rule, both parties are tied to big money...”, Dr. West steps back and says, “we’ve got some real possibilities”.<sup>[14]</sup> Instead of taking the initiative to call for an overthrow of the system, he said he would work with Democrats and Republicans who fight against corporate greed. In addition he perpetuates the myth that “Tunisia, Egypt, northern Africa had to teach the world some democratic lessons”!<sup>[15]</sup> And Michael Moore agreeing with and taking up West’s argument about demands wants to get the Democrats to promise “not to take any money from Wall Street or the banks” and calling for Obama to represent the working people by taxing the rich including derivatives and financial transactions, bringing back Glass-Steagall, taking money out of politics, etc. However, these initiatives are purely reformist and take for granted the System of the market economy and representative “democracy”. Alternatively, ID proposes a moneyless marketless society where power cannot be accumulated or concentrated in a few hands.<sup>[16]</sup>

Michael Albert attending a conference in London recently was asked about #OWS.<sup>[17]</sup> He sounded like a pitch man for the System. He made a call for #OWS to “come up with demands”. Demanding rights (an impolite form of prostrating) from the elite who can at some other time readily take them away is reformist ideology. Albert though provides a deceptive sleight of hand by saying the assembly can also take up other policies, actions, programs “that can be taken without demands”. Yes you may freely re-make society. Yet, next he says, “it (assembly) can make demands of the economy as well.” In a flash, self-determination is gone! One moment he offers freedom, and in the next moment he takes it away. He is just like the system which grants rights and easily takes them away. Demanding reforms from the system presupposes the legitimacy of the system. Calling for reforms from Wall Street is naïve, because the System cannot be reformed to be bothered with human needs. This is in reality a call for upholding the System that causes the crisis. Therefore, Albert takes for granted the market economy and he just demands that the market be more humane and compassionate!

Chris Hedges believes in change within the system. He thinks there are humane forms of capitalism, and that the corporate state as it has arisen in America is a corruption of power. Hedges wants to reverse the “corporate coup d’état”.<sup>[18]</sup> Although he does not think the Occupy movement should make demands from the oligarchy, he thinks the corporate state should be dismantled within the confines of friendly capitalism. Like Chomsky, Hedges seems to believe that there is nothing wrong with capitalism itself; it is just corporate capitalism that is wrong, as if corporate capitalism is not the inevitable outcome of capitalist dynamics! Even though Chris Hedges, does not support the view that #OWS present a list of demands, he still

remains in the reformist camp. For him, the function of liberal institutions is to “provide a safety valve” when things breakdown and the system is not amenable to demands or petitions. These liberal institutions he says offer “piecemeal and incremental” reforms. These reforms pacify the people, but also keep the system intact. Although he states the obvious that tyrannies, like the US, rely more and more on force “to keep public order”, he seems neither to understand the System, i.e. the market economy and representative “democracy”, nor anti-systemic analysis.[\[19\]](#) Hedges offers no alternative to the System (which he does not identify) and no anti-systemic project. Clearly, he sounds like the Democratic Party bureaucratic machine from the halls of Congress to the local level that will “stand with others”, “we are all in this together, we’ll roll up our sleeves and work on this problem”. These are the political slogans to ease the pain caused by the System and do not question the causes of the crisis itself. The struggle is to regain the public sphere which has been closed off by the growth of marketization.[\[20\]](#)

### **Inclusive Democracy (ID) alternative**

Just as the US is not a post racial society, it is also not a post class society. The US cannot simply leave racism as it cannot leave class behind. Classes do exist in America, just as racism is alive and well in America. The present class divisions emphasized by #OWS, where a monolithic class of merely 1% of the population is having more combined wealth than 99% of the population, is only a half truth, or better an oversimplification. It is true that 1% of the population does indeed control such wealth, but these divisions are neither just quantitative nor simply founded on Marx’s class structure based on economic categories. Today’s class divisions are created by the power relations and structures created by the present fundamental institutions and not just by greedy Wall Street hustlers or corrupt corporations. Moreover #OWS’s class analysis is a quantitative fiction in terms of the concentration of economic power. If class were to be dependent solely on financial quantitative data, the 1% do have a concentration of wealth greater than 99%, however the next 10% of the population also have more accumulated wealth than the bottom 89% of the population. Therefore the “99%” is far from united. The interests of the upper middle class and their social status brings them closer to the elites than to those below it; the interests and the social status of petty bourgeois brings them closer to the middle class than to the working class etc. So, #OWS is off target with its quantitative and misleading slogan, “we are the 99%”.

On the other hand, Marx’s class narrative has been shown to no longer be valid. Class is not a layered structure based on economic interests or ownership of the means of production alone, although they are still very important determinants of the ‘class’ position of an individual within the social pyramid. Class stratification in a hierarchical society is based on power relations rather than just on economic inequality as #OWS assumes, although the unequal distribution of economic power is a crucial determinant of the inequality in the distribution of power within present society.[\[21\]](#) The #OWS slogan ignores the socialization process where there are interconnecting interests between the class divisions. The assimilation process, through society’s dominant institutions and the dominant social paradigm[\[22\]](#) makes clear why people in the ensemble of lower groups, or others who suffer other forms of hierarchical power relations, accept, promote and protect the System and its associated institutions and

values. Takis Fotopoulos emphasizes that Inclusive Democracy, “is a new paradigm which, while recognizing the different identities of the social groups which constitute various sub-totalities, at the same time acknowledges the existence of an overall socio-economic system which secures the concentration of power at the hands of various elites and dominant social groups within society as a whole.

The System will create another crisis whether or not #OWS consensus-taking general assemblies abound in every American neighborhood as long as the System is intact. A new political and public space will not be made from a reformist movement. #OWS is another human rights movement petitioning their oppressors for rights. #OWS declares, “that our system must protect our rights, and upon corruption of that system, it is up to the individuals to protect their own rights, and those of their neighbors”.[\[23\]](#) It is apparent from this statement that #OWS takes for granted the System of the market economy and representative “democracy”. There is no analysis of the Systemic causes of the multidimensional crisis we face. Fundamentally, the System of the market economy and representative “democracy” are to be overthrown and replaced with the equal distribution of power in every aspect of the social, political, economic and ecological spheres.[\[24\]](#)

The urgently needed revolution must be anti-systemic, because the System cannot be regulated or reformed to bend to #OWS, or any other reformist grievances or naivety, such as the police are workers too and therefore should be embraced! The police are well paid, well pensioned, well privileged, well fed mercenaries for the ruling elite. The System of the market economy and representative “democracy” is the cause of the multidimensional crisis we face, not corrupt politicians, Wall Street corporations or their underlings. It is imperative to overthrow the System and re-make society based on the ID aims for the equal distribution of political, economic, social, and ecological power.[\[25\]](#) The political and economic elite nationally and internationally (G7, G20, IMF, World Bank, UN and their host of NGOs, think tanks, etc.) determine how the rest of us will live. The Arab Spring with which #OWS identifies has not produced a revolution. The System continues intact with reliant puppets.

It is urgent that in order to have revolution from below it is necessary that everyone attain the same degree of political consciousness. Revolutions in the past have failed because the citizenry did not manage to achieve the same level of political awareness needed to overthrow the System and replace it with the equal distribution of political, economic, social, cultural and ecological power. The System is irrational because it fails to take care not only of human needs, but also the biosphere itself; indeed, society, community, individuals and nature are built around the profit needs of the market economy and its political complement representative “democracy” that keeps the System intact. How can each person in a representative “democracy” give over to a stranger their ownership of decision-taking power? Political and economic decision-taking is unquestionably, unhesitantly and smoothly given/taken away in representative “democracy” to/by someone who claims to represent their constituents’ interests. So it is not by ridding the System of a gaggle of corrupt, unethical, or evil individuals or corporations that will change anything. Capitalist corruption is an outgrowth of the competitive privatized hierarchical society created and reproduced by the market economy and representative “democracy”, therefore, is imperative to replace the System!



In an inclusive democracy the issue of writing letters to newspapers and sending petitions to political representatives to get adequate hospitalization, for example, is a non starter because the basic human need for health care would be available for everyone. The System creates divisions by class, race, ethnicity, sex, gender, etc., and the ensuing hierarchies and financial disparities, therefore must be abolished and replaced with inclusive democracy and the equal distribution of power in the political, economic, social and ecological spheres. Inclusive democracy is the form of democracy that secures the institutional pre-conditions of direct democracy, economic democracy, democracy in the social sphere and ecological democracy. [26] Inclusive democracy is, therefore, a self reflective choice for autonomy. Autonomy is not compatible with heteronomy and its dogmas, religions and irrational or closed theoretical systems which rule out any questioning about their ultimate grounds. So, inclusive democracy as an anti-systemic project creates the conditions for the equal distribution of power among all people. Inclusive democracy challenges the System of the concentration of power itself and not any part of it as with single issue or identity politics. Organizing to reverse the multidimensional crisis brings to the public space the need for a new political organization and program for systemic change. The gap between the rich and the poor will always grow within the class structure under the current capitalist System. Inclusive democracy aims to replace the present society's institutional framework which results in the unequal power distribution and the ensuing class divisions, i.e. the market economy and representative "democracy", as well as the corresponding system of values of the dominant social paradigm, with ID institutions and the corresponding values, which secure the equal distribution of economic, political, ecological and social power.

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