

# OMNI OCCUPY WALL STREET MOVEMENT

## NEWSLETTER #4, 2011, December 7, 2011, Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace

Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters:

<http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/>

**See related OMNI Newsletters on US Capitalism and US Corporations.**

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## RESISTING *CITIZENS UNITED*

Despite the Supreme Court's ruling, much can be done by the states to constrain corporate/1% subversion of representative government/99%. Here are some measures taken by some state legislatures but not yet in Arkansas. The first six will help greatly, but the seventh—to eliminate corporate personhood—is the crucial action.

1. laws to enforce disclosure of campaign contributions
2. corporate registration as a PAC before making campaign expenditures
3. approval of all election spending by corporate boards
4. campaign ads funded by corporations must have "approved by CEO" in the ad
5. restrictions on campaign contributions by government contractors
6. banning of campaign contributions from outside the US
7. resolution supporting a **constitutional amendment rejecting corporate personhood**

We need not wring our hands when so much beneficial work by the citizens and the legislature lies ahead, nor mourn when so many outstanding organizations, such as Public Citizen, oppose the Supreme Court ruling.

## Unanimous to amend

Jonah, Public Citizen [amendment@citizen.org](mailto:amendment@citizen.org) via [uark.edu](http://uark.edu)  
to jbenet 12-7-11

Dick,

Great news! **Yesterday, the city councils of Los Angeles, California, and Albany, New York, voted unanimously to support constitutional amendments that would undo the Supreme Court's disastrous Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission ruling.**

Help keep the momentum going. Join renowned journalist and defender of democracy Jim Hightower in participating in our organizing parties next week.

Find an organizing party in your community or sign up to host one of your own next week. . . .

The parties are also where the exciting planning is being done for the nationwide **day of action on January 21**, the two-year anniversary of the Supreme Court's Citizens United v. FEC ruling, which allows unlimited corporate spending in elections.

Get information about attending or hosting an organizing party in your home or at a local library, cafe or community center on or around December 15.

Jim Hightower is an author, public speaker and radio commentator who for decades has battled the "Powers That Be on behalf of the Powers That Ought To Be." He'll address the house parties, and Public Citizen, along with some of our allies, will lay out our visions for the "Occupy the Anniversary" events taking place across the country on January 21.

This is a historic moment. People are rising up from Wall Street to Tahrir Square to demand democracy, equality and justice.

Join us next week as we organize to take our country back for the people!

Sign up to attend or host an organizing party next week.

With your help, we can "Occupy" the anniversary of the Supreme Court's disastrous decision and take our resistance to corporate rule to the next level.

Onward, Jonah Minkoff-Zern, Aquene Freechild and Mark Hays

Democracy Is For People Campaign, **Public Citizen**

P.S. Read more about the resolution passed yesterday in Los Angeles.

## Alan Grayson, "The Fed Bailouts: Money for Nothing"

Open Mike Blog, Dec. 6, 2011, RSN

The massive 251-page GAO report technocratically entitled 'Opportunities Exist to Strengthen Policies and Processes for Managing Emergency Assistance.' "is the first independent audit of the Federal Reserve in the Fed's 99-year history."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/279-82/8766-the-fed-bailouts-money-for-nothing>

## "Big Banks Finance Billions in Predatory Payday Lending"

Pat Garofalo, ThinkProgress, Dec. 6, 2011, RSN

Garofalo reports: "In fact, the Center for Responsible Lending has found 76 percent of payday loan volume (and \$3.5 billion in annual fees) is due to 'churning,' which is repeat borrowing by customers who paid off their loan, but because of the interest, require another loan before their next paycheck. And according to Credit Slips' Nathalie Martin, a professor at the University of New Mexico, the nation's biggest banks are, in a big way, financing this predatory lending ..."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/news-section2/320-80/8762-big-banks-finance-billions-in-predatory-payday-lending>

## Republican NewSpeak, Scared of Occupy

L. woodall via [uark.edu](http://uark.edu) 12-1-11

At the Republican Governors Association meeting this week in Florida to give GOP state executives a chance to rejuvenate, strategize and team-build one question kept coming up: How can Republicans do a better job of talking about Occupy Wall Street?

"I'm so scared of this anti-Wall Street effort. I'm frightened to death," said Frank Luntz, a Republican strategist and one of the nation's foremost experts on crafting the perfect political message. "They're having an impact on what the American people think of capitalism."

Luntz offered tips on how Republicans could discuss the grievances of the Occupiers, and help the governors better handle all these new questions from constituents about "income inequality" and "paying your fair share":

1. Don't say 'capitalism.'
2. Don't say that the government 'taxes the rich.' Instead, tell them that the government 'takes from the rich.'
3. Republicans should forget about winning the battle over the 'middle class.' Call them
4. Don't talk about 'jobs.' Talk about 'careers.'
5. Don't say 'government spending.' Call it 'waste.'
6. Don't ever say you're willing to 'compromise.'
7. The three most important words you can say to an Occupier: 'I get it.'
8. Out: 'Entrepreneur.' In: 'Job creator.'
9. Don't ever ask anyone to 'sacrifice.'
10. Always blame Washington.

Tell them, "You shouldn't be occupying Wall Street, you should be occupying Washington. You should occupy the White House because it's the policies over the past few years that have created this problem."

<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/ticket/republicans-being-taught-talk-occupy-wall-street-133707949.html>

## “Occupy Protesters Take Over Foreclosed Homes”

Les Christie, CNN Money, Dec. 6, 2011, RSN

Christie reports: "One homeowner they're trying to help is Bobby Hull, an ex-marine and a master plasterer and contractor who has lived in his home since 1968. Hull still has income and access to financial help from family members, just not enough to pay his bloated mortgage principal. 'I can afford \$800 or \$900 a month; I can't afford \$1,200 to \$1,500,' said Hull. Foreclosure in his case made no sense, said Anthony Newby of Neighborhoods

Organizing for Change. His mortgage balance was \$275,000 but the auction of his home only fetched \$80,000, less than one-third of the amount he owed. Everybody, including the bank, would have been better off reducing his balance to an affordable level, said Newby."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/news-section2/440-occupy/8764-occupy-protesters-take-over-foreclosed-homes>

## The Camp Is the World: Connecting the Occupy Movements and the Spanish May 15th Movement

by Luis Moreno-Caballud and Marina Sitrin, Nov. 23, 2011

A look at the recent history of a movement similar to Occupy — **the Spanish indignados or 15M movement** — can shed some light on the opportunities and urgency of this new phase. It is a moment that the authors see as a potential turning point, and one with incredible possibilities. Read More » <http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/the-camp-is-the-world-connecting-the-occupy-movements-and-the-spanish-may-15th-movement>

## In the Face of Repression — Notes from Occupy Oakland

by Miki Kashtan, Nov. 15, 2011

Early morning on Monday, November 14th, the Oakland Police once again evacuated the OccupyOakland camp. That was the day I was planning to attend the facilitation committee meeting. Being unsure about whether or not a meeting would take place, and knowing how long it would be before I could attend a meeting again, I decide to take a chance and go. Read More » <http://www.tikkun.org/tikkundaily/2011/11/15/in-the-face-of-repression-notes-from-occupyoakland-nov-15th/>

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND ALAN GRAYSON

### "What Lincoln Said, 150 Years Ago Today."

Dear Dorothy, (12-3-11) During my two years in Congress, I heard an awful lot of speeches. Some of them were delivered by some of the finest public speakers in America today – like Barack Obama, Neil Abercrombie, John Lewis, Anthony Weiner and Alcee Hastings. But none of them was as profound and poignant as the one that I'm about to share with you. It was delivered to a Joint Session of Congress by President Abraham Lincoln, exactly 150 years ago today. The focus of the President's speech was, of course, the Civil War. But President Lincoln took a short detour, and with a few bare sentences, he summed up an issue that remains with us to this day.

This is what President Lincoln said to Congress, to America, and to us:

"It is not needed, nor fitting here [in discussing the Civil War] that a general argument should be made in favor of popular institutions; but there is one point, with its connections, not so hackneyed as most others, to which I ask a brief attention. It is the effect to place capital on an equal footing with, if not above, labor, in the structure of government. It is assumed that labor is available only in connection with capital; that nobody labors unless somebody else, owning capital, somehow by the use of it induces him to labor. This assumed, it is next

considered whether it is best that capital shall hire laborers, and thus induce them to work by their own consent, or buy them, and drive them to it without their consent. Having proceeded thus far, it is naturally concluded that all laborers are either hired laborers or what we call slaves. And further, it is assumed that whoever is once a hired laborer is fixed in that condition for life.

“Now, there is no such relation between capital and labor as assumed, nor is there any such thing as a free man being fixed for life in the condition of a hired laborer. Both these assumptions are false, and all inferences from them are groundless.

“Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration. Capital has its rights, which are as worthy of protection as any other rights.”

If I were still in Congress, I would have repeated President Lincoln’s speech on the Floor of the House this week, in the same spot where he rendered it 150 years ago. “Labor is the superior of capital.” And we must not “place capital . . . above labor in the structure of government.” Thank you, Mr. Lincoln. If I had to sum up my job as a Congressman in 25 words or less, that would do it.

I realize that for a statement as profound as this one, it is “far beyond [my] poor power to add or detract” (as Lincoln himself said, two years later, at Gettysburg). But I’ll try anyway, recognizing that “the world will little note, nor long remember, what we say.

I find it startling to read something like this, and realize how timeless these battles are. As the French say, “Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.” (“The more things change, the more they stay the same.”) In fact, you can hear echoes of Lincoln’s words in what Elizabeth Warren said just ten weeks ago: “There is nobody in this country who got rich on his own. Nobody.”

Now, admittedly, capital is wealthier, better organized, and far more powerful today than it was in Lincoln’s time. Capital gorges on Republican tax cuts for the rich, on bailouts, on government contracts and corporate welfare, on free money from the Fed, and on monopoly profit. Capital treats politicians and whole political parties like puppets. Capital creates and perpetuates a system where Labor is unemployed, where Labor is in debt up to its eyeballs, where Labor cannot see a doctor when ill, where Labor is pitted against Labor. There probably are plenty of well-meaning people who realize this, throw up their hands, and say, “if you can’t beat them, join them.”

And then there are us. People with a head, and a heart. People who want to occupy Wall Street, occupy K Street, and occupy America with the simple concept of justice for all. People who understand that the very fact that this fight has been going on for 150 years or more, and will continue after you and I are gone – that very fact – makes this a fight that is worth fighting for.

And gradually, things do get better. I know, I know -- two steps forward, one step back. But then two more steps forward.

Oh say can you see, by the dawn’s early light,

What so proudly we hailed, at the twilight’s last gleaming.

When Lincoln spoke, 150 years ago today, his time was the twilight’s last gleaming. And today, you can see the dawn’s early light.

Can you see it?

Courage, Alan Grayson

## The Anti-Empire Report

December 2nd, 2011 by William Blum

[www.killinghope.org](http://www.killinghope.org)

### *Some thoughts that OCCUPY my mind*

When the Vietnam War became history, and the protest signs and the bullhorns were put away, so too was the serious side of most protestors' alienation and hostility toward the government. They returned, with minimal resistance, to the restless pursuit of success, and the belief that the choice facing the world was either "capitalist democracy" or "communist dictatorship". The war had been an aberration, was the implicit verdict, a blemish on an otherwise humane American record. The fear felt by the powers-that-be that society's fabric was unraveling and that the Republic was hanging by a thread turned out to be little more than media hype; it had been great copy.

I mention this to explain why I've been reluctant to jump with both feet on the Occupy bandwagon. I first thought that if nothing else the approaching winter would do them in; if not, it would be the demands of their lives — they have to make some money at some point, attend classes somewhere, lovers and friends and family they have to cater to somewhere; lately I've been thinking it's the police that will do them in, writing *finis* to their marvelous movement adventure — if you hold the system up to a mirror the system can go crazy.

But now I don't know. Those young people, and the old ones as well, keep surprising me, with their dedication and energy, their camaraderie and courage, their optimism and innovation, their non-violence and their keen awareness of the danger of being co-opted their focusing on the economic institutions more than on the politicians or political parties. There is also their splendid signs and slogans, walking from New York to Washington, and not falling apart following the despicable police destruction of the Occupy Wall Street encampment. They've given a million young people other ideas about how to spend the rest of their lives, and commandeered a remarkable amount of media space. The *Washington Post* on several occasions has devoted full page or near-full page sympathetic coverage. Occupy is being taken increasingly seriously by virtually all media.

Yet, the 1960s and 70s were also a marvelous movement adventure — for me as much as for anyone — but nothing actually changed in US foreign policy as a result of our endless protests, many of which were also innovative. American imperialism has continued to add to its brutal record right up to this very moment. We can't even claim Vietnam as a victory. Most people believe that the US lost the war. But by destroying Vietnam to its core, by poisoning the earth, the water, the air, and the gene pool for generations, Washington in fact achieved its primary purpose: preventing the rise of what might have been a good development option for Asia, an alternative to the capitalist model.

It has greatly helped Occupy's growth and survival that they have seldom mentioned foreign policy. That's much more sensitive ground than corporate abuse. Foreign policy gets into flag-waving, "our brave boys" risking their lives, American exceptionalism, nationalism, patriotism, loyalty, treason, terrorism, "anti-American", "conspiracy theorist" ... all those emotional icons that mainstream America

uses to separate a Good American from one who *ain't really one of us*.

Foreign policy cannot be ignored permanently of course, if for no other reason than that the nation's wealth that's wasted on war could be used to pay for anything Occupy calls for ... or anything *anyone* calls for.

The education which Occupy has caused to be thrust upon the citizenry — about corporate abuse and criminality, political corruption, inequality, poverty, etc., virtually all unprosecuted — would be highly significant if America were a democracy. But as it is, more and more people can learn more and more about these matters, and get more and more angry, but have nowhere to turn to, to effectuate meaningful change. Money must be removed from the political process. Completely. It is my favorite Latin expression: *sine qua non* — "without which, nothing".

## U.S. militarism on the chopping block?

War Resisters League via [uark.edu](http://uark.edu) to jbenet

[wrl@warresisters.org](mailto:wrl@warresisters.org)

War Profiteers Get Occupied!

## Occupy and WRL take on the War Machine

Thursday, November 17th was a national day of action called by labor unions and endorsed by the Occupy/(Un)Occupy movement nationally. In preparation for N17, War Resisters League called our members and supporters to action and created a toolkit for antimilitarist activists to use at their local Occupy encampment.

WRL activists and the South Asia Solidarity Initiative at Occupy Wall Street decided on an action called "Resist Empire, Reclaim Our World, Recreate Solidarity," in which over 70 people participated and then took the streets together in a march with tens of thousands. Some of the labor leaders risking arrest in a nonviolent civil disobedience action that day had been trained by WRL National Committee member Jody Dodd and WRL continues to be called on to train intergenerational groups of organizers and activists who, thanks to Occupy, have become reenergized and empowered to act on their principles in the face of government-backed police violence.

WRL has continued to call for a global justice focus at the Occupations and this call is beginning to be heard and answered more and more throughout the country. Tomorrow, November 30th in NYC, WRL'ers will team up with OWS activists for a civil disobedience action at the Aerospace and Defense Finance Conference at 6:30am at the Credit Suisse building at 24th and Madison. Sponsored by the NYC WRL Local, this is the first time that Occupy Wall Street has taken action against the military industrial complex, hopefully the first of many actions to come!

## The Military Budget on the Chopping Block?

On November 21st, the Congressional debt "Super committee" tasked with producing a plan to cut the nation's deficit, announced that it failed to reach an agreement. This deadlock, is supposed to then start a trigger, which would cut into both the country's social service and military spending. Combined with other reduction plans, this would mean nearly \$1 trillion less for the Pentagon over the next ten years.

However, since plans for an expanding military spending are already in place, it is not nearly as dramatic as it sounds. As John Isaacs, executive director of Council for a Livable World and Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation puts it, "It's not a decrease in the military budget. It's reducing the increase." This is in addition to the ramped up lobbying against even this slight shift by Defense Secretary Leon Pannetta and groups like Spend to Defend. See this excellent video put out by the "Cost of War" Project, that breaks this down.

Keep the pressure on--distribute WRL pie chart flyers at your local Occupy and talk with your friends, family, and neighbors about who wins and who loses when it comes to U.S. militarism. Use the WRL toolkit and plan your next action!

For more information, email [wrl@warresisters.org](mailto:wrl@warresisters.org) or call 212-228-0450

For more information on giving opportunities, please email [liz@warresisters.org](mailto:liz@warresisters.org) or call 212.228.0450 x17

### 3 ARTICLES FROM *TIKKUN*, Progressive Jewish Magazine, Nov. 21, 2011

“Occupy that Next Level” by Josh Healey

At the same time that the Occupy movement has successes, several crucial questions continue to pop up. Confusion – both amongst the media and some protesters ourselves – about demands, principles, and tactics has led many natural allies and regular folks who are sympathetic to the movement’s goals to refrain from joining in themselves. In response to those sentiments, and in the spirit of solidarity, here are some suggestions. Read More » <http://www.tikkun.org/tikkundaily/2011/11/21/occupy-that-next-level/>

A message from Muste Institute board member Jim Cole:

Before visiting Occupy Wall Street in lower Manhattan, I'd heard the media criticize the protesters' lack of focus. Many commentators said the Occupy Wall Street movement did not have a consistent message.

As soon as I got to Zuccotti Park, I realized that Occupy Wall Street had a message that was not being widely reported.

The message is that there needs to be a space for civil dialogue about the issues concerning the 99% of people who are underrepresented by most politicians and the majority of the media.

While the movement adapts to new challenges, Occupy Wall Street actions around the globe continue to create a forum for this kind of discussion.

**Since 1974, the A.J. Muste Memorial Institute has funded social justice projects that have helped the 99% find a voice. Some examples:**

"Be the Media", a Los Angeles-based group, worked with inner-city youth to examine the media and tell their own stories through video.

Organizers with the Northwest Workers Justice Project initiative in Oregon did a "mythbusters" tour to talk with unionized workers about immigration issues and workers rights.

The Gap-Bridge Foundation in Asamankese, Ghana hosted a "Women's Rights Awareness Education Project," educating and training rural women to understand and defend their rights.

The St. Louis-based Missourians to Abolish the Death Penalty carried out a "Road Trip for Justice" to speak out against capital punishment in five cities across their state . . . .

*THE NATION* Magazine

3 articles on Occupy in Dec. 12 no.:

"Born-Again Democracy" by William Greider. We are witnessing "the birth of a social movement" that disrupts the governing elites.

"The People's Library Lives," by English Prof. William Scott, who devoted his sabbatical to building a library at Zuccotti Park, which the police destroyed. (Scott is author of *Troublemakers: Power, Representation, and the Fiction of the Mass Worker.*)

"Who's Afraid of OWS?" exposing the plan by a lobbying firm to develop a smear campaign against Occupy Wall St.

END OCCUPY NEWSLETTER #4, December 7, 2011