



# Introduction to Occupy Philly: Machete

Occupy Philadelphia, like the other occupations, is an attempt at creative disruption. It is disruptive in taking over Dilworth Plaza and rupturing—even if marginally—the flow of bodies and traffic in the city and soon perhaps the construction of a \$50 million skating rink scheduled to start in November at the plaza. The occupation has launched a critique of the “democratic” processes of our city and country by trying to construct a more direct kind of democracy on the steps of the city’s bureaucratic machine. But this is a kind of creation as well: the protestors endeavor to forge a democracy that exists for people, not for corporate profit and not for economic efficiency. And they have constructed a city of over 300 tents and in that city created mechanisms to address sanitary, dietary, medical, and educational needs and to exercise greater political freedom.

The project of this special series of Machete is to express that creative disruption in thought. This magazine

means to be a public space where our occupation can question itself and argue among itself and with those outside it about its meaning and the course of its movement. It is a space in which traditions about revolution, democracy, rebellion and protest can be questioned and ruptured, and in which critique is possible. But it can also be an arena for experimentation with new ideas about the movement in which traditional concepts can be reconfigured into newer, better forms more adequate to what we’re doing in Dilworth Plaza and elsewhere. The goal is creative conflict: with undemocratic politics, with our crisis-ridden economy, and among protestors and their interlocutors.

This magazine thereby means to fight the attempts of politics and popular media to tell the occupation what it is. To Obama we’re simply “frustrated” people who don’t know what else to do and so have taken to the streets. To Eric Cantor we’re a “mob,” and to Herman Cain we’re “lazy”

and “jealous.” Despite the differences the message is always the same: the occupations are literally thoughtless. We’re pure, idiotic emotion without the capacity to speak or to think for ourselves. The job of American politics is to give us our voice, they say, in order to make us intelligible for the first time and so they can address our irrational needs.

The occupation movement doesn’t need their voices because it has begun developing its own in the General Assembly, in its direct actions and marches, in the creation of signs and the construction of tent cities, and in the experimental demands already suggested by Occupy Wall Street and those beginning to be formed at Dilworth Plaza. This magazine is meant to be a tool by which those voices already at work can engage themselves as well as others in creative conflict.

-John Schultz