on the most critical issues that we’ve discussed. Paradoxically, some people interpret this openness as the General Assembly being taken over by a faction. I think this is because the General Assembly changes its mind in response to new information. For instance, the General Assembly repeatedly voted against having a meeting with the City. Then it changed its mind and had a big meeting at the Friends Center. After this meeting, the General Assembly voted against having any more meetings with the City.

The second example was how the General Assembly voted overwhelmingly in favor of staying at Dilworth Plaza (with rumors of “bussed in” radicals) on Friday (Nov 11), and then reversed this decision by a similar margin on Thursday (Nov 17) by deciding to move to Thomas Paine Plaza.

Some people might think that there were organized factions that dominated both meetings. But I saw a move in opinion. I saw tons of radicals supporting the proposal to move on Thursday. This happened in response to a day of Action which included a march of over 700-1000 people (possibly our largest action yet) that was organized by Fight for Philly, had a lot of community and union support, and featured a strong public union presence. The unions put out an official statement asking us to move, showed the strongest level of solidarity we had seen, and then the General Assembly decided to act in solidarity with the unions.

I think it makes sense that the General Assembly would change its mind about tactics, as people are more likely to have flexible opinions on tactics than they are on values.

The General Assembly is open-minded exactly because our participants are NOT being super-ideological. This open-mindedness proves that the power and coherence of factions within Occupy Philly is very limited.

I think the open mindedness of the General Assembly is increased by the fact that we have a large number of people who are new to activism and/or are young.

8. The Lack of Personal Relationships

There is a lack of trust within Occupy Philly that is most likely to occur between people who don’t know each other. This happens when organizers ask supporters to observe the movement but do not get involved in working groups. It also happens when people within working groups don’t talk to people in other working groups, and do not talk to people who share different opinions. An excellent example of this is Live Stream. The Live Stream feed is often full of mean accusations. It is easier to make a hurtful statement in an email or when you are using a user name (which often isn’t linked to your name) than to do it face to face.

Solution: introduce yourself to people you don’t know. Don’t tolerate personal attacks.

9. General Assemblies at Night

It is harder to build community and trust when it is dark and you cannot recognize people.

Solution: hold meetings at the Friends Center.

10. Focusing too much on the General Assembly

If you spend all of your time at the General Assembly and do not participate in any of the direct actions, workshops, speakers, music, or cultural events that are organized by Occupy Philly then you are missing out. Too much focus on the intra-organizational drama is not healthy.

11. Lack of Strong Relationships with Existing Philadelphia Organizations

Occupy Philly is working on building relationships with many organizations including the Quakers (and the Friends Center), the unions (SEIU, local AFL-CIO, and others), Jobs With Justice, Fight for Philly, and others. We should build stronger relationships with existing Philadelphia organizations including activist groups, unions, community organizations, churches, and more. We should hold joint actions and support the actions and campaigns of other groups. We should have a values statement that allies can endorse. This will make Occupy Philly less of an outlier on the political landscape.

Conclusion

I think there are some clear solutions that will help increase trust and debunk the rumors that Occupy Philadelphia is controlled by any secret faction or small group. Most notably we need transparency, to develop our message and own media, to encourage people to participate directly in our actions and meetings, and to encourage Occupy Philly participants to talk to people who they disagree with. My hope is that Occupy Philadelphia will move past these internal conflicts and unify over the next weeks and months!

By Aaron Kreider
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Antiphon: Notes on the People’s Microphone

The people’s microphone is a means for amplifying speech in large crowds. The premise is simple: all those within earshot repeat loudly and in unison what the speaker on the floor has just said. In smaller groups, a single repetition can suffice for all to hear. In assemblies of hundreds or thousands, several rounds may be necessary for the message to reach those on the outskirts. It’s a surprisingly effective medium, one that works best when the speaker delivers her message in short segments: no fillers, no obvious drawbacks, people seem comfortable, perhaps even more effective, than technologically reproduced sound. At least there is no crackle, feedback, or electric shock. State-of-the-art technology can help move things along: computers, camera phones, and live-streamed video have been instrumental to the success of the Occupy movement. But arguments about efficiency aside, the performative, ritual, and relational capacities of this vocal medium exceed its utility as a means of spreading information.

The human mic is less a tool than a mode of speech. As Hannah Chadeayne Appel suggests, it is “a synecdoche for the larger issues at stake.” The human mic involves a special kind of speech-act, an actualization of principles in viva voce. Amplification, but also reverber, chorus, equalization, and distortion. It’s a kind of speech at once radically new and ancient, evocative of the choruses of Greek drama, the antiphonal cadences of Gregorian chant, and the liturgical call and response of certain religious ceremonies, in the ety-
pluralistic about the human mic,’ writes Kim, for ‘it exudes solidarity over ego.’ It also marks a shift away from the idea that our speech belongs to us, as if it were a commodity, and the idea that when others reiterate it, it is somehow used up or stolen rather than bolstered and enhanced. The mode is not appropriation, but rather forwarding, reposting, making bigger and better.

Each use of the people’s microphone carries with it an implicit enactment of the very thing being demanded: This is what democracy looks like. Kim calls this a "prefigurative politics…living in the conditional tense." Each fragment of speech amplified by the people’s mic expresses a desire for, and also models and genuinely creates, a pluralistic process.

To the “They Have No Message and/or They Haven’t Accomplished Anything” Crowd of Naysayers:

1: The message is crystal clear and easy to comprehend - the distribution of wealth in the United States has become extremely lopsided. This distribution has allowed the top 1% of individuals and the largest corporations to buy and sell almost all of our politicians. We think this has had dire consequences for America. End of message.

2: The accomplishments so far:
- ABC news reports that 1 million people have closed their bank accounts and switched to credit unions and local banks since Occupy announced bank transfer day!
- A Bank of America spokesman admitted that they abandoned their $5 ATM fee plan due to complaints from their customers “and the atmosphere created by the ongoing protests.”
- A leaderless movement shut down one of the largest ports in the US, proving the effectiveness of the model.
- In six weeks Occupy has called attention to the long-ignored issues of economic inequality and the hoarding of our nation’s monetary and physical assets by a tiny minority of our citizens. Previously, no one was talking about how this allows for the political process to be rigged by those at the top to insure they continue to receive government favors in exchange for their massive campaign contributions to politicians. They give those donations not out of the kindness of their corporate hearts but because they know they will be able to call in those favors when they need to receive corporate welfare for the businesses they have run into the ground through their poor practices, i.e. socialist bailouts for failed banks. No one was debating any of this in the mainstream media two months ago. Now those issues have been forced back into the national conversation.
- The increasingly militarized police forces around America have been exposed, including their expensive new control technology. They have no effective oversight and have been extremely eager to arrest unarmed, nonviolent American citizens seeking to “assemble and petition the government with their grievances” as stated in the first amendment. Their willingness to violate their own codes of conduct as well as the law of the land has been exposed and will not soon be forgotten.
- Though they continue to claim we have no message, politicians on both sides of the aisle have already publicly attempted to address the issues occupiers have raised. Again, this is something absent from the national stage two or three months ago.

Because the corporate media conglomerates and the obscenely wealthy board members who control it realize that the majority of Americans of both parties could easily get behind the message that the political process is currently bought and sold by campaign contributions, and that they have no decent arguments against this message, they continue to attempt to follow the policy of "repeat a lie long enough and it becomes the truth." Therefore: "they have no message - they have no message - they have no message..."

-Matt