

OCCUPY PHILLY

machete



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Occupy Philly: Machete Issue 3

At five o'clock on Sunday, November 27, a group of occupiers sat down in Dilworth Plaza facing west on Market Street. On Saturday, Mayor Nutter had stated that eviction would proceed in the 48 hours following five o'clock on Sunday. The occupiers linked arms, surrounded by a crowd so large it required a double human mic. A group of police stood in the street facing the occupiers. Tension built as helicopters hovered lower, television news crews illuminated the scene with Hollywood action lighting, and the police shifted from foot to foot. By Monday night, the police still had not moved in, and Occupy Philly was able to hold a General Assembly as usual.

But there has been nothing usual about the occupation, in Philly or elsewhere. From the second planning meeting at Arch Methodist, which was attended by seven hundred more than attended the first, the Occupation has been an ever-rotating group. I met new people at each General Assembly I went to, and there were many new faces at Dilworth on Sunday. We have had no roadmap, no idea what will happen; we have pushed on by affirming in each other that anything can happen. We have held Dilworth since October. We have fed each other, taken care of each other. We have formed a community.

Our ideas alone will not carry us beyond Dilworth. Our strength will be the

bonds we have built, the organizations we have formed. This is not the end of Occupy, but neither is it a grand beginning. We have joined together, we have learned, we have shared history, and now we will go forward together.

We present this third issue of Occupy Philly: Machete in two parts. The first is a snapshot of Dilworth; the second concerns Occupy beyond Dilworth. We also include in this issue the first in a two-part series about the human mic. The second part will be in Issue Four. We do not know where things will stand then, but we'll be there. Join us.

-Sid Rothstein



Eviction and Occupation

The crisis of Occupy Philly's eviction has revealed its contradictory relationship to the political and economic processes in Philadelphia. But the crisis has also opened tentative possibilities for recognizing those processes for what they are, and for developing new kinds of occupation that break with the deadening ceremonies of the status quo.

Nutter, just before evicting OP, claimed that it had become "dangerous" and "intolerable," that it stood against the good of the community by blocking jobs at Dilworth Plaza, and that it was simply illegal. But Occupy Philly's confrontations with Nutter and City Hall over the last two weeks have revealed a contradiction at the heart of the occupation. A more transgressive tendency has led OP to take over spaces and transform them, even when this led to breaking with the political and legal system. The occupation reconfigured Dilworth Plaza, of course, but it was two weeks later, at the protest against Eric Cantor, that the movement occupied a private building for the first time (Huntsman Hall at UPenn), even if only briefly. This tendency developed quickly, and on October 24th several protestors were arrested in the street outside the police roundhouse, and several

more in the lobby of the Comcast Building a short time after that. The November 17th protests and arrests on the Market Street Bridge were followed the next day by more arrests in Wells Fargo.

But a tendency to respect private and public property and to work only within the political-legal system was always present. A need for legality structured the movement from its first mass meetings in early October, when seeking a permit from Nutter was a condition for beginning the protest. The issue of permits has become an overbearing one, dominating every discussion at the GA for weeks before OP's eviction. This tendency to obedience, not transgression, was clearest in the bitter arguments which broke out in the GA over arrests and civil disobedience.

The contradiction so far dominating OP is that it has been simultaneously transgressive and permitted. It has been a sanctioned use of a public space "granted" by City Hall (as Nutter has constantly reminded us), but also an attempt at taking over and temporarily transforming spaces in protest of the political and economic order. OP's crisis of eviction is an exacerbation of this same problem. The ambiguous legality of its camp at Dilworth has evaporated

completely. It has been confronted with the necessity of becoming either entirely innocuous and permitted, or of attempting a more transgressive (and more uncertain) path.

This contradiction is a result of the fact that OP is embedded in two kinds of ritualistic time: political and economic. The political system in this city and country is a kind of ceremony we're allowed to take part in every two to four years. The eviction of OP reveals that outside the circumscribed ceremony of voting, agitation for political or economic change is blasphemous and if it keeps up will be "dealt with." This is why, to Obama, we're simply a "frustrated" mass, and why Nutter in his eviction notice sneered at "what they [the occupiers] call democracy." Both are saying we can only have a voice if it's expressed within the existing, two-party political process, and so only if we give up our voice completely to the existing order through the ritual of voting. Our economic lives are ritualized as well. The working day returns endlessly and we're required to faithfully go through the motions: to work, then back home where we prepare for the next day, only to repeat the cycle. Our weekends and week-nights are those parts of the endless ritual

repetition which prepare us to do it all over again. Our consumption, too, is ceremonialized. With the arrival of the holiday season, annual rituals of buying like Black Friday, Cyber Monday, and the entire Christmas season arrive once more. The endless repetitions of making, selling and buying don't end after Christmas but structure our lives by keeping money and goods and people flowing smoothly towards the maximization of profit.

Of course, these two ritualized times are not really distinct. They work together both locally and nationally. Locally, the problem that OP poses to City Hall is that it threatens not only to disrupt the normal political ritual-time by acting outside the voting booth, but it also houses a possibility for rupturing normal economic functions (like the project at Dilworth Plaza). Nutter's politics is designed to put down whatever could rupture the normal flow of money and goods through this city, and nationally, the Citizens United ruling ensures that unlimited corporate money can flow into political campaigns. The deregulation of finance since the 1970's has made it so that profits are increasingly private and risks are increasingly public, i.e., corporate losses are eventually bailed out by the people. (David Harvey calls this "neoliberalism.") In other words, our current politics and economics are rituals that work together to hold the status quo in place. Through them we're supposed to faithfully perform the same actions again and again without question.

Such ritual time paves over any real "present" in which new, transformative action could occur. Politics and the economy, we're told, are established, determined processes. The job of the people is simply to participate in the established ceremonies: voting, buying, working, selling.

OP necessarily began within these ritualistic processes. Procuring a permit, and so beginning within the limits of Philadelphia politics, allowed it room to grow

and establish itself. But its subsequent attempts at transgression have often remained almost ceremonial. The arrests beginning on October 24th were highly planned, pre-announced, and by definition temporary and limited appropriations of space. As a result, only slight modifications were needed by the city's political and legal machinery to plug these events into a "normal" flow. The process has gone like this: the police escort the protesters to their destination; then, the police cordon off those planning to be arrested; and after a

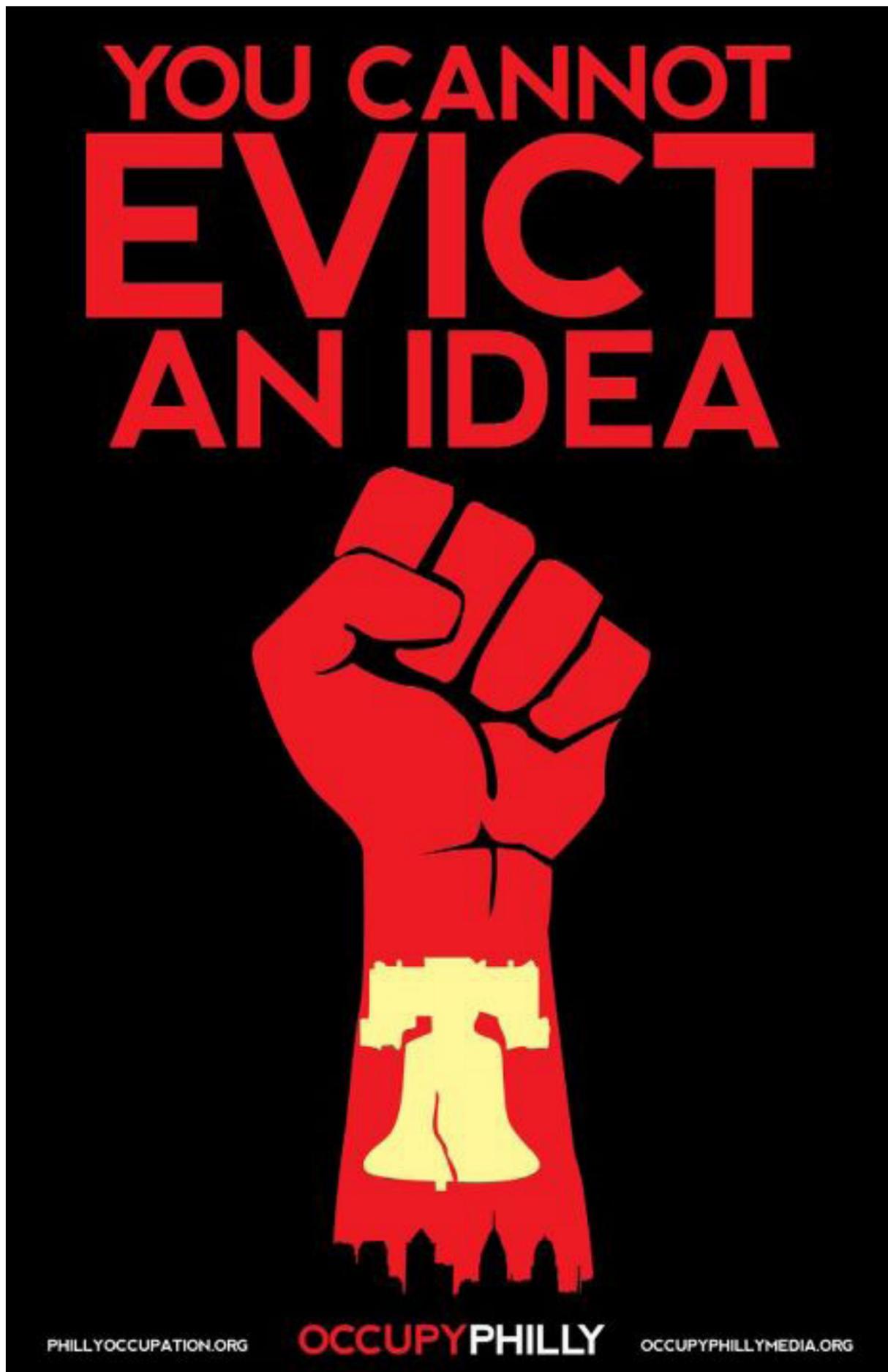
from which it arose, but the nature of which it hasn't really confronted yet. But eviction opens OP to a possible new horizon. First, an opportunity arises not simply to maintain or multiply the occupation but also to begin making it a rupture in the rituals of politics and economics in Philadelphia. This is the chance to occupy not only space but also the processes and flows of the city in ways capable of disrupting and rearranging them. Occupy Oakland attempted something like this in its general strike, an act of occupation that rerouted some of

the ritual movements of bodies and goods through the city. This tendency has already emerged in Philadelphia in budding attempts to prevent the foreclosure of a home in North-West Philly.. These examples represent different, more disruptive and creative kinds of occupation that don't simply take over and maintain a certain space, but also jar loose the deadening, ritualistic processes into which we've been locked. Second, it's possible the eviction can open the movement to a deeper understanding of the systemic nature of the problems it's confronting. It's becoming more and more obvious that politics and economics are processes that reinforce one another at a systemic level: both in the recent coordination of mayors around the country to evict those protesting the political-economic situation, and in Nutter's politics aimed at forcefully plugging the movement back into the normal economic functioning of the city and country.

With the crisis of eviction, then, comes a chance to move past

the occupation's contradictory relation to the city and beyond those strategies that have already been neutralized. This is a chance for Occupy Philly to accelerate and intensify its ruptures with the deadening political and economic ceremonies that hold the status quo so firmly in place.

-John Schultz



prescribed period of time the arrests begin. The whole process looks a lot like going to confession; waiting for one's turn to meet with the absolving priest; and then entering the confessional to receive the necessary penance.

The contradiction between OP's transgressiveness and its obedience comes from its restless attempts to distinguish itself from the political and economic rituals

“Occupy Everything”: Interview with Ben Webster



JS: There has been a lot of talk in the media about the next steps of Philadelphia's occupation. What do you think Occupy Philly's next steps ought to be?

BW: Across the country the occupations that have really done things the best are the ones that don't stick to any one tactic. In Oakland, they got kicked out, they called a general strike, they tried to take over a building, they moved back in, they got kicked out again. Instead of repeating the cycle again and calling another general strike, and doing another building takeover, they decided to lend their solidarity to Occupy Berkeley. And this to me is thinking strategically. So I have a few ideas: we've seen people moving onto campuses temporarily, which gives them lots of resources inside and outside, and a more friendly base of students and faculty. There's also the possibility of taking over buildings. We've got any number of abandoned buildings here. Obviously this is another qualitative leap. But this makes sense to me. I don't think we need to fetishize unity. I think we need to do the opposite, and constitute an expanding network of autonomous bodies that could coordinate but don't have to be beholden to a single GA that then gets bogged down in logistical questions.

JS: Do you think Thomas Paine Plaza would be an effective space for protest? Or are there other spaces that are more important?

BW: At this point I don't think it's effective to have a lot of people camping outside. I think this is a tactic that captured the imagination and rightfully so: it was very interesting and new and

seemed to resonate with very inspiring things that were happening in other parts of the world like Egypt and Spain and Greece and Israel. But I feel that to move to Thomas Paine Plaza or another spot in the current form would either maintain the current inertia, or devolve into even more banal forms. For example, at Thomas Paine Plaza, the city said, "You can be there from 9-7, and you can't have tents." So it would pretty much devolve to the level of any other demonstration that happens all the time in Philadelphia and which is roundly ignored, where you hold signs and you have a speaker or two who tries to rouse people in this very formulaic and ceremonial way.

JS: So the problem is not necessarily whether or not to occupy space but that if staying in a space becomes the sole tactic of the movement, then it becomes circumscribed and ineffective.

BW: Yeah, precisely. I feel that our slogan right now needs to be, "Generalize the Occupation," "Occupy Everything." The fact of the matter is, in our lives, most of us spend very little time in symbolic, public spaces. We spend time in our homes, in our workplaces, in our neighborhoods, and in other kinds of institutions, and I think the same logic that's being used [in the Occupy movement]—reclaiming and reusing public space—can be carried over to our neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces, our other institutions, with the same spirit of direct democracy and self-governance. Right now the paradigm is that there's one General Assembly, there's one Occupy Philly, there's one space, Dilworth Plaza. And I think the next step has to be that there are multiple sovereign bodies, multiple general assem-

blies, multiple sites of occupation that use the whole city and beyond. Last Thursday in New York they used the whole city: occupying the subways, occupying the university, occupying many different parks in rolling actions. I think this is the logic we need to be using.

BW: Let's be honest. Every aspect of our society, every institution from the family to religion to education and work has been thrown into crisis. I think people are unmoored from every institution that they've known. So the traditional regimes of work, the traditional regimes of family, the traditional regimes of political participation are becoming opportunities. I mean there's very little commanding people's loyalty aside from the most reactionary positions which are commanding more and more people. But all that creates an opening and I think the "occupy" meme is a great starting point and can be reworked and reformulated for each of these nodes of crisis.

JS: What role do you see the GA playing in the life of Occupy Philly in its current circumstances (eviction, etc.)?

BW: What has been fascinating to me over the past week is that fewer and fewer people are at the encampment, and more and more activity like the GA is being done at places like the Friends' Center or the Methodist Church. So there's this real gap between the real nuts and bolts of the tactic, which is "Let's all camp out together," and the sovereign body, which seems to be almost totally removed from the nuts and bolts of the tactic. Yet there's an obsessing over reproducing this body. So I think it's becoming more and more contradictory. I think it's already happening that certain groups within the occupation are starting to pull away and there's already people talking about any number of other things and starting to act towards them—other tactics. And I think they're starting to pull away from the GA and, whether the GA acknowledges them or not, acting autonomously. Which I think is great. But the GA still is the political and moral center of the movement, and will continue to be for a while. I think it's important continuing to have a GA, if for nothing else to start to coordinate any number of occupations that might be happening elsewhere. What we're trying to do here is find models of self-governance that don't rely on existing hierarchies and that don't appeal to existing power structures. And I think this is really important. If we talk about radical change in our society, this sort of experimentation is very necessary. And it is experimentation, you know?

-John Schultz

Debunking the Rumors of an Occupy Philly Power Elite

Over the past month, Occupy Philly has faced an increasing amount of internal conflict.

The first sign of conflict was the skepticism with which people viewed the people who were talking with the city. When these people merged into the legal team - this skepticism carried over to the entire legal team. The legal team was attacked from all sides. It was either too compromising with the city or not compromising enough. Some people thought that the legal team was making a power grab. Recently the legal team has received less criticism as they have been emphasizing their role as that of neutral facilitators of communication between the City and the General Assembly.

More recently, the focus has shifted to the facilitation working group. They are seen a lot due to their work of leading the General Assembly. They tend to stand or sit at the front and get more speaking time than anyone else. The facilitation team makes important decisions about process. For instance, they'll decide whether someone who wants to speak is giving a clarifying question, their own opinion, an amendment, a totally new proposal (that is often phrased as being an amendment) or an off-topic rant.

The facilitation team is also linked to the very mysterious CoCo meeting - a meeting of representatives from working groups that reviews proposals and set the agenda for the General Assembly. This meeting is mysterious because many people have not attended it and the membership fluctuates a lot. Many people will only attend it when they are trying to get their proposal on the agenda.

So why do people think there is a small secret group that controls Occupy Philly? Here are several possible causes:

1. The Mainstream Media is Framing the Message

The mainstream media is trashing Occupy Philadelphia, raising fears of an anarchist or radical takeover, and causing a lot of people to turn against us.

Solutions: develop our own media. Fact check and send out press releases (or blog posts) that correct every single media mistake. Develop relationships with reporters.

2. Occupy Philly has a Small Number of Key Leaders

The movement relies upon a small number of people (perhaps 20-40) who do most of the organizational work. These people run the working groups and are more likely to live or be on-site. Almost all social movements have some people who are more active than others, and they almost always tend to exert more influence. If a person is a well-known and respected participant in a movement, then people are more likely to listen to their opinions and they will have more power. The fact that we try to deny that we have any leaders makes it harder for people to figure out what is really going on - that participation plus experience equals leadership.

Solution: let people know how they can become leaders. Continue to make trainings available.

3. Occupy Philly lacks Transparency

We are doing a bad job of being a transpar-

4. Occupy Philly lacks Explicit Values

We have values, but they are not stated explicitly. So our values are not evident to many observers. We try to appeal to the 99% and try to bring an extremely diverse set of opinions under a single coalition. If we had more cohesiveness in our values (ex. we all agreed that racism was a critical issue, instead of a "special interest"), then we would have a higher level of trust for each other and less suspicion about a secret group taking over.

Solution: make a values statement.

5. Occupy Philly is Ineffective at Achieving Goals

Part of the reason people are so divided and suspicious is that we aren't united together in working on any campaign. If we had a strategic campaign, and ideally were making serious progress on it, then many of the rumors would fly away. Lacking a common enemy, we are too likely to lash out against each other.

Solution: develop a strategic plan to achieve a goal that will benefit people's lives and build a movement for long-term social change.

6. Philadelphia is full of Anarchists

Tons of anarchists (and other radicals) live in Philadelphia. Anarchists are on most of the working groups. Typically in social movements you are more likely to find a revolutionary socialist group (like the International Socialist Organization - the best organized and largest radical left group in the US) with a strong participation in a movement. Probably because this Occupy Movement is too broadly targeted



On November 11, when the General Assembly voted overwhelmingly (see note 1) to stay in the Dilworth Plaza some people assumed that this verified that the radicals (anarchists or others, some of whom are in the official working group: Radical Caucus) had managed to takeover Occupy Philly.

Note 1: Alex in facilitation estimated 150 to 3. Chris G estimated that there were fewer than 100 people present. In either case the vote was at least 90% in favor.

However, on November 17 the General Assembly voted by a similar overwhelming margin (Note 2) to move across the street to Thomas Paine Plaza. When this happened, some people assumed that the movement was now controlled by moderates and/or the Reasonable Solutions working group.

Note 2: there were no official GA minutes on Nov 17.

ent organization. That was fine when we just started, but almost two months into the process we are still failing on several very basic things. For instance, we didn't have regular General Assembly minutes until Nov 18. Early on, there was a list of working group and other contacts, but it wasn't published online or updated.

Many people do not understand our decision-making process and as a result they will engage in behavior that is disruptive. If people do not understand the "stack" then they may end up yelling at the General Assembly. If people do not understand our process, they will abuse clarifying questions to make arguments.

Solutions: publish General Assembly minutes (started happening around Nov 18), the budget, a list of contacts, a guide to how to use our decision-making process, and a list of people who control means of communication (Facebook, Twitter, and websites).

in its values for revolutionary socialists, we have a stronger presence of anarchists.

Anarchists are far less likely to vote together, whereas some revolutionary socialist groups will practice "democratic centralism." The group will hold a meeting in advance to decide its position and then all the group members will have to advocate that position within the larger movement -- even if they don't agree with it. By contrast anarchists would continue their internal debates in the larger group setting.

So you see a lot of radicals in Occupy Philadelphia, because Philadelphia is a working class city (tied with Detroit for poverty) with a lot of radicals.

Solution: increase communications between radicals and non-radicals through workshops, speakers, and face-to-face conversations.

7. The General Assembly is Open-Minded

The General Assembly has changed its opinion

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 outsider supporters 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.

Solutions: 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 Phila-

delphia 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 contorted grammar, or you simply won't be heard.

The human mic is an ingenious solution to the problem of mass discourse in sites where amplified sound is banned, including the original Occupy Wall Street encampment at Liberty Plaza in New York. It was used in the occupation of the Madison, Wisconsin capitol building in February 2011, and was documented on video in use over a decade ago in the WTO protests of 1999 in Seattle. In an era that prefigures the ubiquity of smart phones,

texting, and twitter, protestors have found ingenious ways to disseminate vital information quickly through large groups without recourse to any prosthetic beyond the human voice and a few well-chosen hand signals.

In less exigent circumstances, it's a cumbersome system, at times counter-productive: as Richard Kim notes, General Assembly meetings and group decision-making processes conducted by these means can be "incredibly, agonizingly, astonishingly slow." And yet despite the obvious drawbacks, people seem compelled and mesmerized by this form of vocalization. Some speakers opt to use the people's mic even when a megaphone is ready to hand and sanctioned by permit: Francis Fox Piven, speaking at Occupy Philadelphia on November 8, 2011, began her remarks through the human mic before switching to an electrically powered one. With the latter, she made several adjustments before discovering the right angle at which to hold the electric mic, and a few words were lost to the ether

in the process. At times, the human mic seems more intuitive, 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 reverb, 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-

mological sense of the word (liturgies = "work of the people").

Amplification

The human microphone goes up to eleven. Or rather, it doesn't go up — it goes across, horizontally, radiating in concentric circles, or fanning out in a wedge-shaped pattern. In this medium, speech skips away and comes back to mirrored but also transformed by the crowd. Through collective speech, the people's mic shifts away from unified, solitary personhood. There is "something inherently

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.

The human mic not only amplifies; it also enacts. It is related to what J. L. Austin calls a performative utterance: a statement that actualizes what it invokes.

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.

[Part one of two. Continued in Occupy Philly: Machete Issue Four. — ed.]

-By Hoday King
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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. Previ-

ously, 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 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 cam-

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



Social Movements

These are some ideas I shared with a small workshop on the History of US Social Movements at Occupy Philly last week.

Once upon a time, a small group of Americans gathered together to express their moral indignation at what they viewed as the central injustice (they called it "sin") in U.S. society: slavery. Despised, feared, and isolated, they were accused of inciting violence and warfare, dismissed as radical lunatics, and derided for their attire, their lack of a coherent plan, and their refusal to compromise. They had no idea how their movement would end, or that they would devote thirty years of their lives to it; they could not have predicted the breakup of the old political system, the formation of a new, mildly antislavery, political party (the Republicans) or the Civil War. They saw themselves as

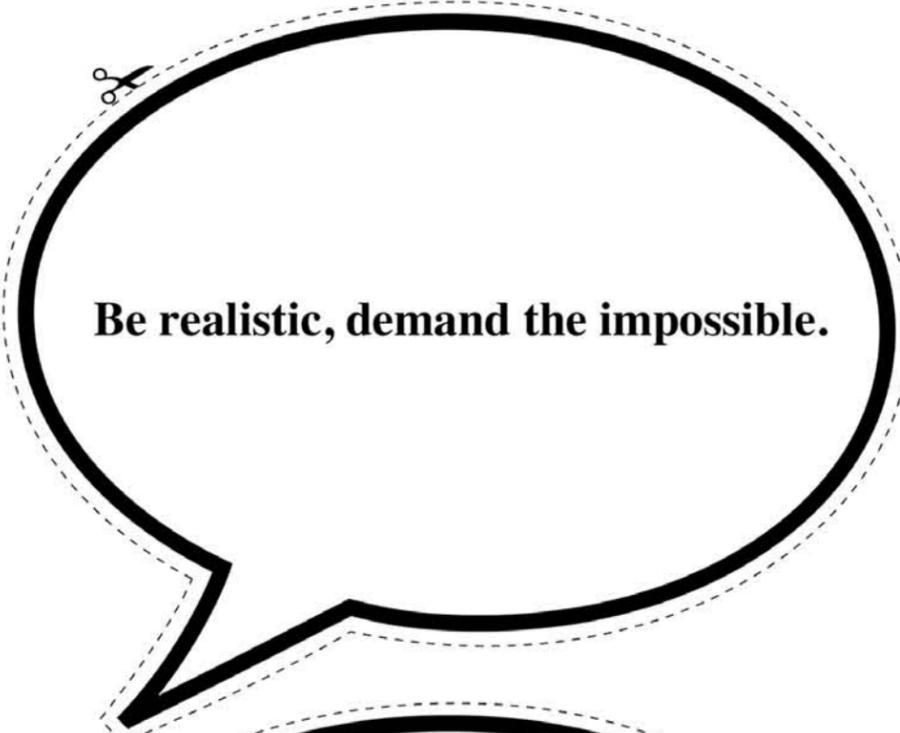
agents of moral change.

We don't know how social movements will turn out and neither do the upstarts who begin them – but I for one find such beginnings inspiring. Some shift from destructive action (busting up a saloon) to political transformation (Prohibition); others begin by sitting at a lunch counter or a city bus and, after much hard struggle and in the face of still-uncounted violence, put an end to Jim Crow. More recently, the Tea Party has risen from an oddly-costumed group of outraged Americans into a major force in American right-wing politics. When these things happen in other countries, we call it an Arab (or Prague) Spring. At the start, all such movements are condemned and derided; many just fizzle out.

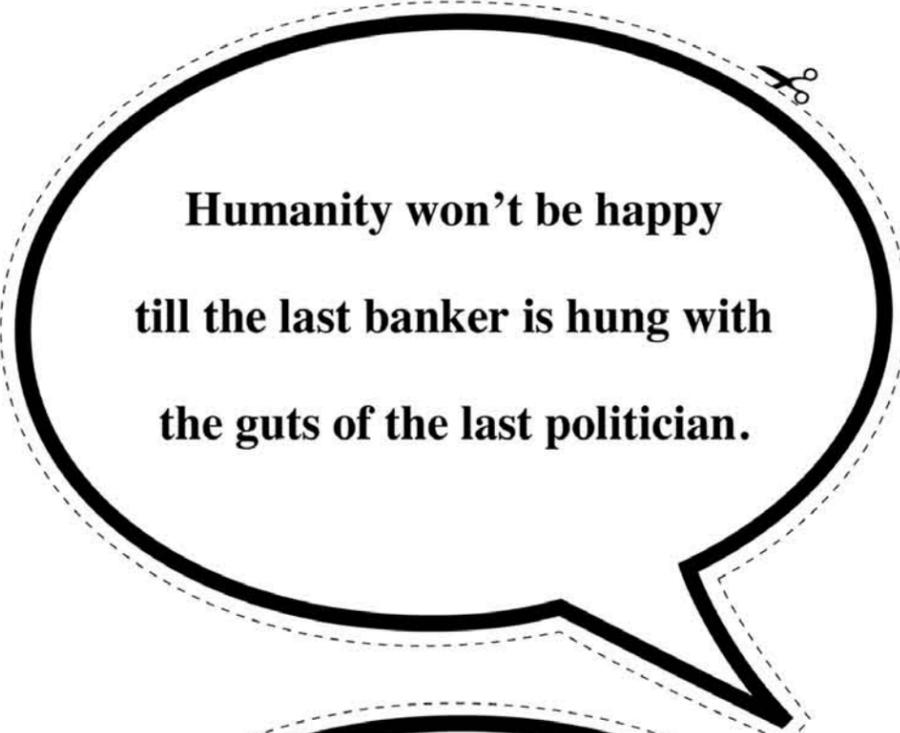
We have no idea how Occupy Wall Street/Philadelphia will end, whether

people who are expressing outrage on behalf of the "99%" will be evicted, coopted, or simply snowed out. But dismissing this expression of moral indignation is to ignore a central, inspiring, practice in American history. This is what we do, sometimes in the face of extreme violence and terror, usually in the face of eye-rolling and sarcasm, often in the face of seemingly intractable forces. At the beginning, we sit in, we express outrage, we conduct non-violence training and we hold sessions in strategy; we march, we argue, we develop our ideas, we give speeches, and we vote. We call it democracy in action, and it is how all social movements begin.

Lori D. Ginzberg
Professor of History and Women's Studies
Penn State University



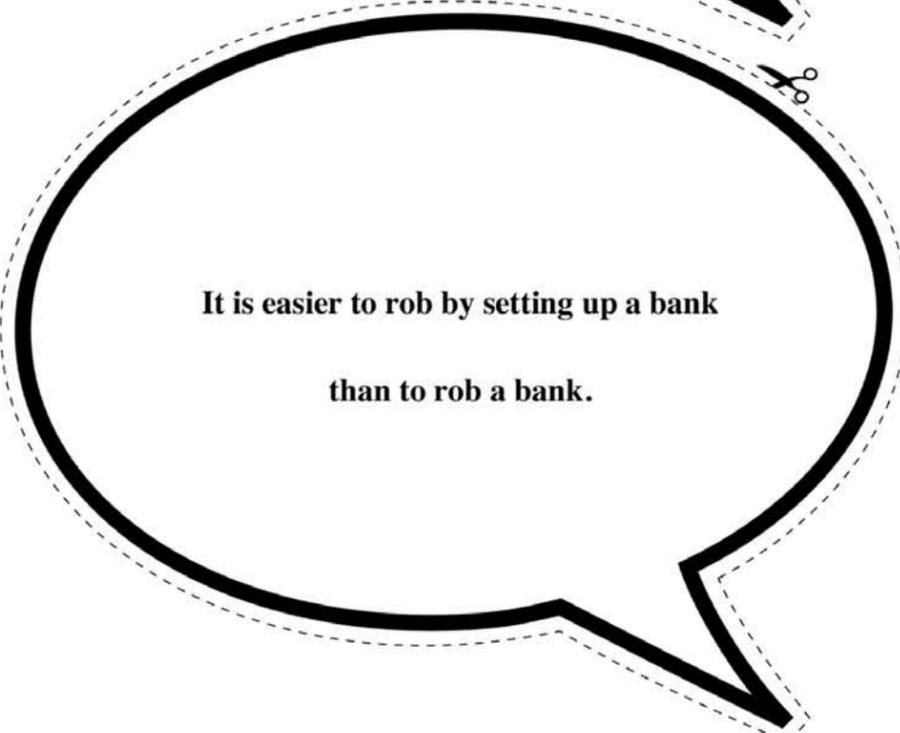
Be realistic, demand the impossible.



**Humanity won't be happy
till the last banker is hung with
the guts of the last politician.**



**I participate.
You participate.
He/She participates.
We participate.
They profit.**



**It is easier to rob by setting up a bank
than to rob a bank.**

Art by Edward Schexnayder.

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Please send questions, comments, and article submissions to macheteoccupyphiladelphia@gmail.com.
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