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United States of Occupation



Liberty Square is where it all began. But far from Wall Street, in parks and plazas and public spaces across the nation, people outraged at financial crimes and political skulduggery have slept and eaten and talked and cared for one another — a new American civic space has been created. Marching with signs, shouting with strength, demonstrating with peace: in every corner of the country, the occupation has arrived.

Camping out with strangers is never easy, even under the best conditions. So the Idahoans who've joined **Occupy Boise** have developed an outlet: a grievance booth, designed to collect evidence for the injustices stated in the Declaration of the Occupation. There, people are able to articulate their reasons for joining the movement, vent their frustrations and tell personal stories.



While **Occupy Wall Street** sits in the belly of the financial beast, **Occupy Detroit** symbolizes the devastation wrought by those financial and corporate elites: “Wall Street is the source of the problem,” occupiers there say, “and Detroit is the result.” Since the occupation of Grand Circus Park began on October 14, the camp has risen to the challenge of building a political movement in a city blighted by vacant homes, buildings, lots and schools by deploying its resources to provide for homeless Detroiters.

Occupy Los Angeles set up tents on the steps of City Hall, where their proximity to Skid Row has been both a blessing and a curse. Within days, Skid Row residents started showing up for food and water. Thefts and violence soon followed. But since working with local advocacy groups like LA-CAN (**Los Angeles Community Action Network**), starting an **Occupy the Hood** affinity group and instituting a policy of inclusive self-policing, security has improved. Many at the camp take pride in this accomplishment.

Occupy Tucson began their encampment on October 15 at Armory Park, just two blocks from the city’s financial district. Each night thereafter, police entered the park at the 10:30 p.m. curfew with a pad of citations; though each carried more than \$1,000 in fines, determined Tusconans continued to hold the park. On the evening of November 3, Tucson police roused the encampment. Everyone was forced to pack up and leave. They walked a few blocks up South Stone Ave. and reoccupied at Veinte De Agosto Park.

Police trashed **Occupy Boston**’s encampment on October 11, but the protesters returned and several hundred people are now sleeping in Dewey Square. With a unanimous mandate from their general assembly, the legal working group is preparing a preemptive lawsuit which would ask for injunction relief against any future attempt to evict the occupiers from Dewey Square.

In **Albany**, Governor Andrew Cuomo asked Mayor Jerry Jennings to clear the encampment near the State Capitol, but Jennings and the city police department refused. Tennesseeans scored a victory when a U.S. district judge issued a temporary restraining order against a curfew the police were trying to enforce on the Occupy Nashville encampment at Legislative Plaza.



In the middle of the night on October 25, some 500 riot police surrounded **Occupy Oakland**'s Oscar Grant Park, tore down the encampment and arrested at least 105 people. That afternoon, more than a thousand people marched back to the camp and though the police once more met them with force—tear gas, rubber bullets and flash grenades—the occupiers took back the park and immediately called for a city-wide general strike. On the same night, across the bay in San Francisco, police backed down on their threat to evict the occupation.

Around the world people poured into the streets in solidarity with Occupy Oakland. One week later on November 2, instructors held teach-ins, dozens of businesses closed voluntarily and demonstrators took to the streets of Oakland for the general strike, periodically clashing with police and eventually shutting down the Port of Oakland. In Los Angeles, New York, Denver and dozens of other cities across the country, people marched to show their support for the strike.

Occupy DC is keeping the heat on at Capitol Hill, with arrests recorded at a super-committee hearing, an occupation of General Atomics (a defense contractor that specializes in drone aircraft) and the periodic shut-down of the Chamber of Commerce. “Thus far the police have been a model that Oakland and New York and other police could learn from,” said occupier David Swanson. “I’ve watched a police officer refuse the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s request to arrest us as we blocked the Chamber’s doors.”

On November 6, thousands from university, non-profit and community groups nationwide joined **Occupy DC** to protest the Keystone XL pipeline project. Forming an unbroken chain around the White House, demonstrators called on President Obama to reject Transcanada’s plan to send polluting tar sand crude from Alberta to the Gulf of Mexico.

On November 3, **Occupy Wall Street** convened a People’s Trial of Goldman Sachs, with Chris Hedges and Cornel West presiding and victims of foreclosures and public lay-offs speaking as witnesses. After finding Goldman Sachs culpable for “fraudulent manipulation of financial markets,” hundreds marched to its headquarters, where the NYPD arrested 16 people.

At **Occupy Austin**, as elsewhere across the country, protesters have relocated private funds through bank actions. The occupation’s Bank Action Committee has overseen transfers from Bank of America, Wells Fargo and Chase to local credit unions. Texan credit unions reported 47,000 people had joined and \$326 million was moved in October — four times the usual growth rate. Nationwide, the Credit Union National

Association reports 650,000 people have joined credit unions and have added \$4.5 billion in new savings accounts in the past month.



As of this writing, there have been demonstrations in nearly 1,000 cities worldwide. From Anchorage to Orlando, encampments are being created by people who likely never imagined they would sleep in a park in winter. Even Antarctica has been “occupied,” thanks to researchers at McMurdo Station who braved the cold to show solidarity with the movement. And though police continue to arrest occupiers across the nation, they are quickly learning that while you can arrest bodies, you can’t arrest an idea.

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