

hold this space until we are heard: by each other, and by those who tremble at the power of the people.

## The World

We are not alone and we are not the first to do this. In Europe there were protests against deep cuts to social services. In the Arab Spring, people across the Middle East and North Africa rebelled against poverty, corruption and authoritarian rule. Three cruel dictatorships were overthrown. That has inspired this movement.

Though we have a history of resistance to oppression, this time, the people in the United States were among the last to awaken and rise up. Our fight is a crucial one, because the U.S. is a center of the world's corporate capitalism. Still, **the struggle of the 99% is a global one because the economic system is global and so are its consequences: war, poverty and ecological disaster.** Our struggle is tied to the struggles of people all over the world.

## Wall Street

Wall Street stands for a particular form of private wealth that is at the heart of all that is wrong in the world. The financial economy (stock markets, derivatives,



“securitized mortgages” that caused the 2008 collapse) is distant from everyday experience, and unaccountable to government or the people, and it is the cause of much misery for the 99%. The contrast Main Street / Wall Street emphasizes the way that the interests of moneyed power diverge from the interests of the people. Wall Street is a symbolic shorthand; it is not a real place. It is a fantasy: buying

and selling as a perfect system for absolutely everything. We reject that model because we embrace our full humanity. We refuse to be mere things that are bought and sold. We are not satisfied to trade and contract our time and our selves. We have needs and desires and thoughts, and friends and lovers, families and communities. In the fullness of our being, **we will care for and love each other, and live not as things but as people.**

## Act

Together, we are enduring these problems, and we are reaching out to one another, across our differences, across our distances, to find and recognize each other, to create the space to assemble, to craft solutions together. This is a break from all previous forms of politics, where certain people lead and others follow. **This is not a leaderless movement, it is a movement where we are all leaders.** Instead of focusing on what we individually want, now we are focused on what we have in common, and how to make those commonalities a basis for transforming our society.

We will gather. We will speak. We will make new spaces public. We will occupy. We will multiply. We will tell strangers about what is happening. We will convince our families that things will and must change. We will utter our grievances loudly. We will spread the word in our neighborhoods and schools, in our shops and at our tables. We will bring our friends together to act. We will divest from corrupt institutions. We will invent new ways to protest. We will found new democracies. We will form new alliances. We will make new friends. We will invent new possibilities.

**And we will change what is possible.**



Images courtesy of David Shankbone and Adbusters.



## Why Occupy?

Why are masses of people speaking out in public spaces across the country? Who are they, and what do they want? The mainstream media gives us only shallow answers to these questions. But what is happening is a serious and deep response to our current political and financial crises. That is why it is important that you understand what is going on, and that you get involved.

There are four main ideas behind the occupation. They address what it means to live a democratic life in our time. The first idea is an understanding that something is deeply wrong with the economic system. Wealth is distributed in an increasingly unequal way. The system rewards and promotes the destruction communities, as well as natural and urban environments. The second idea is that this economic system is directly implicated in the corruption of our political systems. It has never been more clear how far from democratic our “democracy” is. The third idea is the realization that we are a *wæ*: the 99%. This world works off our labor for the benefit of 1% of the population. The last idea is a recognition that **we have to**

act together to change the world—instead of looking to politicians for answers, we must see ourselves as the source of solutions. We are not asking for concessions from the powers-that-be; we are redefining what power is and how a democratic culture uses it.

## The Inequality

Income and wealth are concentrated in the hands of a very small group of people in the U.S. and the world. This situation has gotten noticeably worse in the last generation. Compared to other places, we in the U.S. are among the least equal of all countries. This unfair distribution of resources is not a question of merit, nor necessity, nor an outcome of excessive greed. After all, the wealthy are no better than the rest of us. They have not done more. They are not smarter. Inequality is not fair, it is not natural, and it is not justifiable. The system distributes wealth unequally regardless of the ethics and desires of any individual. **Our common good demands that we create a world in which our social wealth is divided so that everyone can live a decent life.**

## The Corruption

There has always been a gap between the American ideals of equality and democracy and the reality of American political life. We have acted to close that gap before: to address class, racial, and gender discrimination. Today, the power of money has degraded the principals of equality and democracy. So corrupting is the influence of money on our political system that regular people have almost no say in governance. The failure of legislatures



to make meaningful campaign reform, the decision of the Supreme Court to equate money with speech, and corporations with people, and the system of influence peddling—all conspire to construct a government that is democratic in name only. The real effects of this situation are government policies shaped by corporate interests. They rob us of our wealth, devastate our ecosystems, destroy our health and our welfare, and leave us uneducated and impoverished.

## The 99%

We are learning to say “we.” We have so often been manipulated by divisions: the us-against-them frame is as divisive as it is easy and effective. But the 99% encompasses almost all of us: from the poorest to the moderately well off—all races, genders, abilities, and ethnicities. Groups that had been pitted against each other are finding ways to work together. “99%” foregrounds a division that had been hidden: the division between those who rule and those who work. **We are the 99%; we are the great mass of people asserting that the world must be reordered to provide for all of us.**

Too many of us have been rendered unproductive as massive unemployment continues. So we have found a new vocation, and occupy ourselves with protest. Our presence in public space gives new meaning to being political: it links our bodies to the idea that another world is possible.

## The Space

The United States occupies a space that long before had been inhabited by others. American settlers participated in massive displacements for centuries, making space for themselves at the expense of others. Now *we* are being displaced. We are pushed out of our houses, out of our squares and parks. There was a time when a public square was valued as a central place of meeting. Anyone could stand on a box and speak on the issues of the day; groups could gather and discuss. But when we get together in public, we discover that the public square has become a myth. There is no place where we are free to gather and speak. It is irrelevant that our Constitution’s First Amendment guarantees the right to assembly and speech.

We are harassed. We are gassed. We are beaten. We are arrested. What was public has become private. We have discovered what some of us had already known and experienced; it is possible not to have a place to be: to be homeless, to be dispossessed, and to be ignored. But we will not be ignored and we will not be silenced. We will have our say, and we will have our place to speak from. **We have committed ourselves to remaking a public place and holding it as a precious and necessary ground for reconstructing life. We will**